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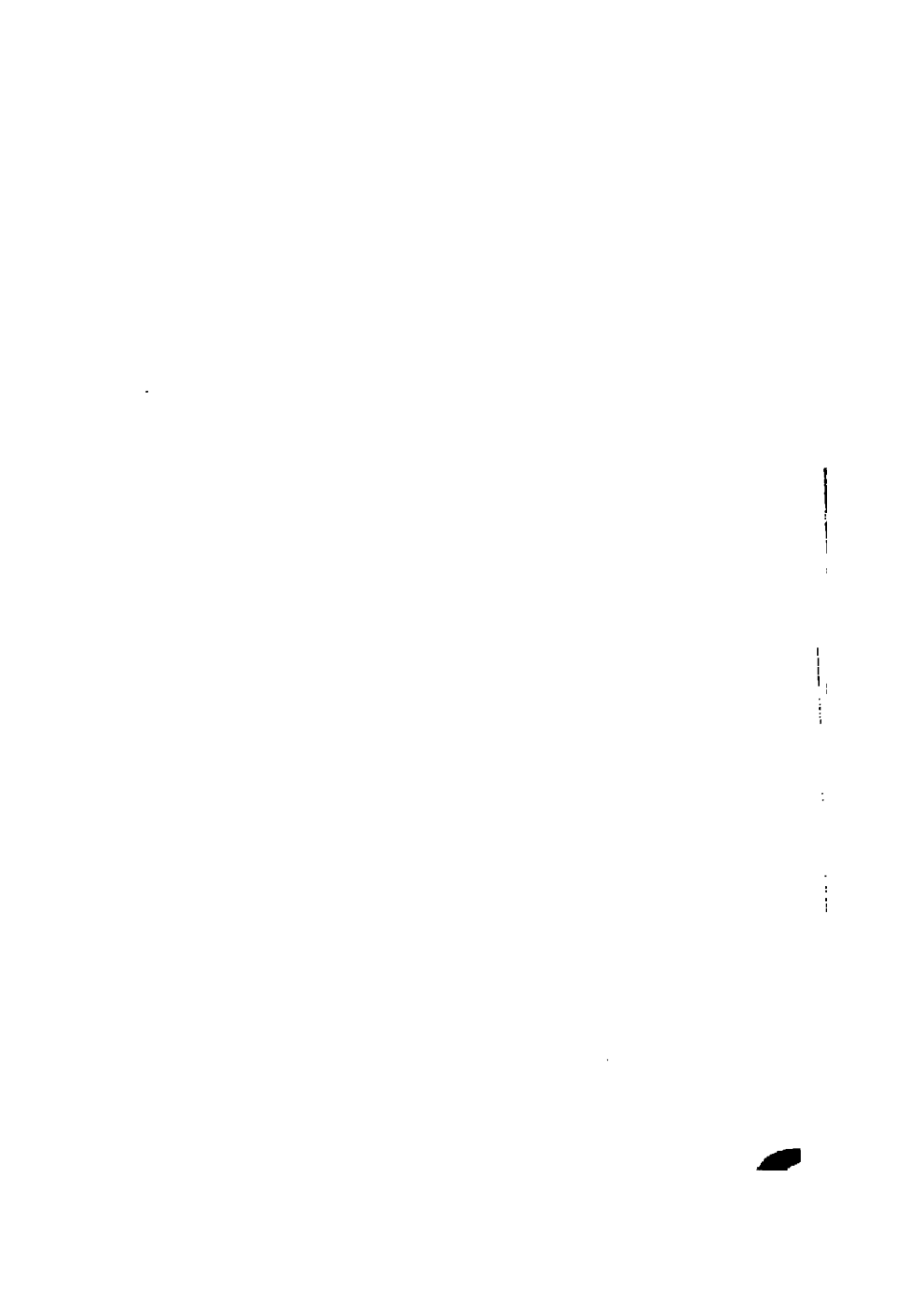
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89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100

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THE SILENT BATTLE

By GEORGE GIBBS

The Silent Battle

The Maker of Opportunities

The Forbidden Way

The Bolted Door

Tony's Wife

The Medusa Emerald

**D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK**

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“The table rang from end to end with joke and laughter.”

[Page 208.]

17/25

THE SILENT BATTLE

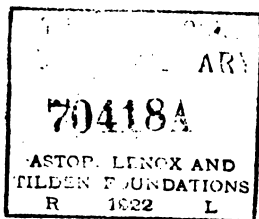
BY
GEORGE GIBBS



ILLUSTRATED

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. LOST	1
II. BABES IN THE WOODS	11
III. VOICES	22
IV. EDEN	33
V. WOMAN AND MAN	46
VI. THE SHADOW	60
VII. ALLEGRO	73
VIII. CHICOT, THE JESTER	84
IX. THE LORINGS	95
X. MR. VAN DUYN RIDES FORTH	109
XI. THE CEDARCROFT SET	122
XII. NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN	136
XIII. MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM	151
XIV. THE JUNIOR MEMBER	166
XV. DISCOVERED	177
XVI. BEHIND THE ENEMY'S BACK	190
XVII. "THE POT AND KETTLE"	200
XVIII. THE ENEMY AND A FRIEND	212
XIX. LOVE ON CRUTCHES	225
XX. THE INTRUDER	236

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXI. TEMPTATION	247
XXII. SMOKE AND FIRE	261
XXIII. THE MOUSE AND THE LION	273
XXIV. DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND	285
XXV. DEEP WATER	297
XXVI. BIG BUSINESS	310
XXVII. MR. LORING REFLECTS	323
XXVIII. THE LODESTAR	338
XXIX. ARCADIA AGAIN	350

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
“The table rang from end to end with joke and laughter”	<i>Frontispiece</i>
“Do tell me something more, Nina. Was she young and pretty? ”	134
“And you never cared for any one else? ”	196
“Father! . . . Jane’s whisper was at his ear”	240
“A fashionable party entered and was conducted . . . to an adjoining table”	280
“Later, in her mother’s absence, Jane found it”	334

THE SILENT BATTLE

I

LOST

GALLATIN wearily lowered the creel from his shoulders and dropped it by his rod at the foot of a tree. He knew that he was lost—had known it, in fact, for an hour or more, but with the certainty that there was no way out until morning, perhaps not even then, came a feeling of relief, and with the creel, he dropped the mental burden which for the last hour had been plaguing him, first with fear and then more recently with a kind of ironical amusement.

What did it matter, after all? He realized that for twenty-eight years he had made a mess of most of the things he had attempted, and that if he ever got back to civilization, he would probably go diligently on in the way he had begun. There was time enough to think about that to-morrow. At present he was so tired that all he wanted was a place to throw his weary limbs. He had penetrated miles into the wilderness, he knew, but in what direction the nearest settlement lay he hadn't the vaguest notion—to the southward probably, since his guide had borne him steadily northward for more than two weeks.

That blessed guide! With the omniscience of the inexperienced, Gallatin had left Joe Keegón alone at camp after breakfast, with a general and hazy notion of whip-

THE SILENT BATTLE

ping unfished trout pools. He had disregarded his mentor's warning to keep his eye on the sun and bear to his left hand, and in the joy of the game, had lost all sense of time and direction. He realized now from his aching legs that he had walked many miles farther than he had wanted to walk, and that, at the last, the fish in his creel had grown perceptibly heavier. The six weeks at Mulready's had hardened him for the work, but never, even at White Meadows, had his muscles ached as they did now. He was hungry, too, ravenously hungry, and a breeze which roamed beneath the pines advised him that it was time to make a fire.

It was a wonderful hunger that he had, a healthful, beastlike hunger—not the gnawing fever, for that seemed to have left him, but a craving for Joe's biscuits and bacon (at which he had at first turned up his pampered aristocratic nose), which now almost amounted to an obsession. Good old Joe! Gallatin remembered how, during the first week of their pilgrimage, he had lain like the sluggard that he was, against the bole of a tree, weary of the ache within and rebellious against the conditions which had sent him forth, cursing in his heart at the old Indian for his taciturnity, while he watched the skillful brown fingers moving unceasingly at the evening task. Later he had begun to learn with delight of his own growing capabilities, and as the habit of analysis fell upon him, to understand the dignity of the vast silences of which the man was a part.

Not that Gallatin himself was undignified in the worldly way, for he had lived as his father and his father's fathers before him had lived, deeply imbued with the traditions of his class, which meant large virtues, civic pride, high business integrity, social punctilio, and the only gentlemanly vice the Gallatin blood had ever been

LOST

hair to. But a new idea of nobility had come to him in the woods, a new idea of life itself, which his conquest of his own energy had made possible. The deep aisles of the woods had spoken the message, the spell of the silent places, the mystery of the eternal which hung on every lichened rock, which sang in every wind that swayed the boughs above.

Heigho! This was no time for moralizing. There was a fire to light, a shelter of some sort to build and a bed to make. Gallatin got up wearily, stretching his tired muscles and cast about in search of a spot for his camp. He found two young trees on a high piece of ground within a stone's throw of the stream, which would serve as supports for a roof of boughs, and was in the act of gathering the wood for his fire, when he caught the crackling of a dry twig in the bushes at some distance away. Three weeks ago, perhaps, he would not have heard or noticed, but his ear, now trained to the accustomed sounds, gave warning that a living thing, a deer or a black bear, perhaps, was moving in the undergrowth. He put his armful of wood down and hid himself behind a tree, drawing meanwhile an automatic, the only weapon he possessed, from his hip pocket. He had enough of woodcraft to know that no beast of the woods, unless in full flight, would come down against the wind toward a human being, making such a racket as this. The crackling grew louder and the rapid swish of feet in the dry leaves was plainly audible. His eye now caught the movement of branches and in a moment he made out the dim bulk of a figure moving directly toward him. He had even raised the hand which held his Colt and was in the act of aiming it when from the shelter of the moose-wood there emerged—a girl.

She wore a blue flannel blouse, a short skirt and long

THE SILENT BATTLE

leather gaiters and over one hip hung a creel like his own. Her dress was smart and sportsmanlike, but her hat was gone; her hair had burst its confines and hung in a pitiful confusion about her shoulders. She suggested to him the thought of Syrinx pursued by the satyrs; for her cheeks were flushed with the speed of her flight and her eyes were wide with fear.

Comely and frightened Dryads who order their clothes from Fifth Avenue, are not found every day in the heart of the Canadian wilderness; and Gallatin half expected that if he stepped forward like Pan to test her tangibility, she would vanish into empty air. Indeed such a metamorphosis was about to take place; for as he emerged from behind his tree, the girl turned one terrified look in his direction and disappeared in the bushes.

For a brief moment Gallatin paused. He had had visions before, and the thought came into his mind that this was one like the others, born of his overtaxed strength and the rigors of the day. But as he gazed at the spot where the Dryad had stood, branches of young trees swayed, showing the direction in which she was passing and the sounds in the crackling underbrush, ever diminishing, assured him that the sudden apparition was no vision at all, but very delectable flesh and blood, fleeing from him in terror. He remembered, then, a tale that Joe Keegón had told him of a tenderfoot, who when lost in the woods was stricken suddenly mad with fear and ended like a frightened animal running away from the guides that had been sent for him. Fear had not come to Gallatin yet. He had acknowledged bewilderment and a vague sense of the monstrous vastness of the thing he had chosen for his summer plaything. He had been surprised when the streams began running up hill instead of down, and when the sun appeared suddenly in a new

LOST

quarter of the heavens, but he had not been frightened. He was too indifferent for that. But he knew from the one brief look he had had of the eyes of the girl, that the forest had mastered her, and that, like the fellow in Joe's tale, she had stampeded in fright.

Hurriedly locking his Colt, Gallatin plunged headlong into the bushes where the girl had disappeared. For a moment he thought he had lost her, for the tangle of underbrush was thick and the going rough, but in a rift in the bushes he saw the dark blouse again and went forward eagerly. He lost it, found it again and then suddenly saw it no more. He stopped and leaned against a tree listening. There were no sounds but the murmur of the rising wind and the note of a bird. He climbed over a fallen log and went on toward the slope where he had last seen her, stopping, listening, his eyes peering from one side to the other. He knew that she could not be far away, for ahead of him the brush was thinner, and the young trees offered little cover. A tiny gorge, rock strewn, but half filled with leaves, lay before him, and it was not until he had stumbled halfway across it that he saw her, lying face downward, her head in her hands, trembling and dumb with fear.

From the position in which she lay he saw that she had caught her foot in a hidden root and, in her mad haste to escape she knew not what, had fallen headlong. She did not move as he approached; but as he bent over her about to speak, she shuddered and bent her head more deeply in her arms, as though in expectation of a blow.

"I'm not going to hurt you," he said softly.

At the sound of his voice she trembled again, but he leaned over and touched her on the shoulder.

"I'm very sorry I frightened you," he said again. And then after a moment, "Have you lost your way?"

THE SILENT BATTLE

She painfully freed one arm, and looked up; then quickly buried her head again in her hands, her shoulders heaving convulsively, her slender body racked by childish sobs.

Gallatin straightened in some confusion. He had never, to his knowledge, been considered a bugaboo among the women of his acquaintance. But, as he rubbed his chin pensively, he remembered that it was a week or more since he had had a shave, and that a stiff dark stubble discolored his chin. His brown slouch hat was broken and dirty, his blue flannel shirt from contact with the briars was tattered and worn, and he realized that he was hardly an object to inspire confidence in the heart of a frightened girl. So, with a discretion which did credit to his knowledge of her sex, he sat down on a near-by rock and waited for the storm to pass.

His patience was rewarded, for in a little while her sobs were spent, and she raised her head and glanced at him. This time his appearance reassured her, for Gallatin had taken off his hat, and his eyes, no longer darkly mysterious in shadow, were looking at her very kindly.

“I want to try and help you, if I can,” he was saying gently. “I’m about to make a camp over here, and if you’ll join me——”

Something in the tones of his voice and in his manner of expressing himself, caused her to sit suddenly up and examine him more minutely. When she had done so, her hands made two graceful gestures—one toward her disarranged hair and the other toward her disarranged skirt. Gallatin would have laughed at this instinctive manifestation of the eternal feminine, which even in direst woe could not altogether be forgotten, but instead he only smiled, for after all she looked so childishly forlorn and unhappy.

LOST

"I'm not really going to eat you, you know," he said again, smiling.

"I—I'm glad," she stammered with a queer little smile. "I didn't know *what* you were. I'm afraid I—I've been very much frightened."

"You were lost, weren't you?"

"Yes." She struggled to her knees and then sank back again.

"Well, there's really nothing to be frightened about. It's almost too late to try to find your friends to-night, but if you'll come with me I'll do my best to make you comfortable."

He had risen and offered her his hand, but when she tried to rise she winced with pain.

"I—I'm afraid I can't," she said. "I think I—I've twisted my ankle."

"Oh, that's awkward," in concern. "Does it hurt you very much?"

"I—I think it does. I can't seem to use it at all." She moved her foot and her face grew white with the pain of it.

Gallatin looked around him vaguely, as though in expectation that Joe Keegón or somebody else might miraculously appear to help him, and then for the first time since he had seen her, was alive again to the rigors of his own predicament.

"I'm awfully sorry," he stammered helplessly. "Don't you think you can stand on it?"

He offered her his hand and shoulder and she bravely tried to rise, but the effort cost her pain and with a little cry she sank back in the leaves, her face buried in her arms. She seemed so small, so helpless that his heart was filled with a very genuine pity. She was not crying now, but the hand which held her moist handkerchief was

THE SILENT BATTLE

so tightly clenched that her knuckles were outlined in white against the tan. He watched her a moment in silence, his mind working rapidly.

"Come," he said at last in quick cheerful notes of decision. "This won't do at all. We've got to get out of here. You must take that shoe off. Then we'll get you over yonder and you can bathe it in the stream. Try and get your gaiter off, too, won't you?"

His peremptory accents startled her a little, but she sat up obediently while he supported her shoulders, and wincing again as she moved, at last undid her legging. Gallatin then drew his hasp-knife and carefully slit the laces of her shoe from top to bottom, succeeding in getting it safely off.

"Your ankle is swelling," he said. "You must bathe it at once."

She looked around helplessly.

"Where?"

"At the stream. I'm going to carry you there."

"You couldn't. Is it far?"

"No. Only a hundred yards or so. Come along."

He bent over to silence her protests and lifted her by the armpits. Then while she supported herself for a moment upright, lifted her in his arms and made his way up the slope.

Marvelous is the recuperative power of the muscular system! Ten minutes ago Gallatin had been, to all intents and purposes of practical utility, at the point of exhaustion. Now, without heart-breaking effort, he found it possible to carry a burden of one hundred and thirty pounds a considerable distance through rough timber without mishap! His muscles ached no more than they had done before, and the only thing he could think of just

LOST

then was that she was absurdly slender to weigh so much. One of her arms encircled his shoulders and the fingers of one small brown hand clutched tightly at the collar of his shirt. Her eyes peered before her into the brush, and her face was almost hidden by the tangled mass of her hair. But into the pale cheek which was just visible, a gentle color was rising which matched the rosy glow that was spreading over the heavens.

"I'm afraid I—I'm awfully heavy," she said, as he made his way around the fallen giant over which a short while ago they had both clambered. "Don't you think I had better get down for a moment?"

"Oh, no," he panted. "Not at all. It—it isn't far now. I'm afraid you'd hurt your foot. Does it—does it pain you so much now?"

"N-o, I think not," she murmured bravely. "But I'm afraid you're dreadfully tired."

"N-not at all," he stammered. "We'll be there soon now."

When he came to the spot he had marked for his camp, he bore to the right and in a moment they had reached the stream which gushed musically among the boulders, half hidden in the underbrush. It was not until he had carefully chosen a place for her that he consented to put her on the ground. Then with a knee on the bank and a foot in the stream, he lowered her gently to a mossy bank within reach of the water.

"You're very kind," she whispered, her cheeks flaming as she looked up at him. "I'm awfully sorry."

"Nothing of the sort," he laughed. "I'd have let you carry *me*—if you could." And then, with the hurried air of a man who has much to do: "You take off your stocking and dangle your foot in the water. Wiggle

THE SILENT BATTLE

your toes if you can and then try to rub the blood into your ankle. I'm going to build a fire and cook some fish. Are you hungry?"

"I don't know. I—I think I am."

"Good!" he said smiling pleasantly. "We'll have supper in a minute."

He was turning to go, when she questioned: "You spoke of a camp. Is—is it near here?"

"N-o. It isn't," he hesitated, "but it soon will be."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

He laughed. "Well, you see, the fact of the matter is, I'm lost, too. I don't think it's anything to be very much frightened about, though. I left my guide early this morning at the fork of two streams a pretty long distance from here. I've been walking hard all day. I fished up one of the streams for half of the day and then cut across through the forest where I thought I would find it again. I found a stream but it seems it wasn't the same one, for after I had gone down it for an hour or so I didn't seem to get anywhere. Then I plunged around hunting and at last had to give it up."

"Don't you think you could find it again?"

"Oh, I think so," confidently. "But not to-night. I'm afraid you'll have to put up with what I can offer you."

"Of course—and I'm very grateful—but I'm sorry to be such a burden to you."

"Oh, that's nonsense." He turned away abruptly and made his way up the bank. "I'm right here in the trees and I can hear you. So if I can help you I want you to call."

"Thank you," she said quietly, "I will."

II

BABES IN THE WOODS

GALLATIN'S responsibilities to his Creator had been multiplied by two.

Less than an hour ago he had dropped his rod and creel more than half convinced that it didn't matter to him or to anybody else whether he got back to Joe Keegón or not. Now, he suddenly found himself hustling busily in the underbrush, newly alive to the exigencies of the occasion, surprised even at the fact that he could take so extraordinary an interest in the mere building of a fire. Back and forth from the glade to the deep woods he hurried, bringing dry leaves, twigs, and timber. These he piled against a fallen tree in the lee of the spot he had chosen for his shelter and in a moment a fire was going. Many things bothered him. He had no axe and the blade of his hasp-knife was hardly suited to the task he found before him. If his hands were not so tender as they had been a month ago, and if into his faculties a glimmering of woodcraft had found its way, the fact remained that this blade, his Colt, fishing-rod and his wits (such as they were), were all that he possessed in the uneven match against the forces of Nature. Something of the calm ruthlessness of the mighty wilderness came to him at this moment. The immutable trees rose before him as symbols of a merciless creed which all the forces around him uttered with the terrible eloquence of silence. He was an intruder from an alien land, of no importance in the changeless scheme of things—less

THE SILENT BATTLE

important than the squirrel which peeped at him slyly from the branch above his head or the chickadee which piped flutelike in the thicket. The playfellow of his strange summer had become his enemy, only jocular and ironical as yet, but still an enemy, with which he must do battle with what weapons he could find.

It was the first time in his life that he had been placed in a position of complete dependence upon his own efforts—the first time another had been dependent on him. He and Joe had traveled light; for this, he had learned, was the way to play the game fairly. Nevertheless, he had a guilty feeling that until the present moment he had modified his city methods only so far as was necessary to suit the conditions the man of the wilderness had imposed upon him and that Joe, after all, had done the work. He realized now that he was fronting primeval forces with a naked soul—as naked and almost as helpless as on the day when he had been born. It seemed that the capital of his manhood was now for the first time to be drawn upon in a hazardous venture, the outcome of which was to depend upon his own ingenuity and resourcefulness alone.

And yet the fire was sparkling merrily.

He eyed the blade in his hand as he finished making two roof supports and sighed for Joe Keegón's little axe. His hands were red and blistered already and the lean-to only begun. There were still the boughs and birchbark for a roof and the cedar twigs for a bed to be cut. He worked steadily, but it was an hour before he found time to go down to the stream to see how his fugitive fared. She was still sitting as he had left her, on the bank of the stream, gazing into the depths of the pool.

"How are you getting on?" he asked.

"I—I'm all right," she murmured.

BABES IN THE WOODS

"Is the ankle any better? I think I'd better be getting you up to the fire now. Perhaps, you'd be willing to cook the fish while I hustle for twigs."

"Of—of course."

He noticed the catch in her voice, and when he came near her discovered that she was trembling from head to foot.

"Are you suffering still?" he questioned anxiously.

"N-no, not so much. But I—I'm very cold."

"That's too bad. We'll have you all right in a minute. Put your arms around my neck. So." And bending over, with care for her injured foot, he lifted her again in his arms and carried her up the hill. This time she yielded without a word, nor did she speak until he had put her down on his coat before the fire.

"I don't know how—to thank you—" she began.

"Then don't. Put your foot out toward the blaze and rub it again. You're not so cold now, are you?"

"No—no. I think it's just n-nervousness that makes me shiver," she sighed softly. "I never knew what a fire meant before. It's awfully good—the w-warmth of it."

He watched her curiously. The fire was bringing a warm tint to her cheeks and scarlet was making more decisive the lines of her well-modeled lips. It did not take Gallatin long to decide that it was very agreeable to look at her. As he paused, she glanced up at him and caught the end of his gaze, which was more intense in its directness than he had meant it to be, and bent her head quickly toward the fire, her lips drawn more firmly together—a second acknowledgment of her sense of the situation, a manifestation of her convincing femininity which confirmed a previous impression.

There was quick refuge in the practical.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I'm going to clean the fish," he said carelessly, and turned away.

"I'd like to help, if I could," she murmured.

"You'd better nurse your ankle for a while," he said.

"It's much better now," she put in. "I can move it without much pain." She thrust her stockinged foot farther toward the blaze and worked the toes slowly up and down, but as she did so she flinched again. "I'm not of much use, am I?" she asked ruefully. "But while you're doing other things, I might prepare the fish."

"Oh, no. I'll do that. Let's see. We need some sticks to spit them on."

"Let me make them;" she put her hand into the pocket of her dress and drew forth a knife. "You see I *can* help."

"Great!" he cried delightedly. "You haven't got a teapot, a frying-pan, some cups and forks and spoons hidden anywhere have you?"

She looked up at him and laughed for the first time, a fine generous laugh which established at once a new relationship between them.

"No—I haven't—but I've a saucepan."

"Where?" in amazement.

"Tied to my creel—over there," and she pointed, "and a small package of tea and some biscuits. I take my own lunch when I fish. I didn't eat any to-day."

"Wonderful! A saucepan! I was wondering how—tied to your creel, you say?" and he started off rapidly in the direction of the spot where he had found her.

"And please b-bring my rod—and—and my *shoe*," she cried.

He nodded and was off through the brush, finding the place without difficulty. It was a very tiny saucepan, which would hold at the most two cupfuls of liquid, but it

BABES IN THE WOODS

would serve. He hurried back eagerly, anxious to complete his arrangements for the meal, and found her propped up against the back log, his creel beside her, industriously preparing the fish.

"How did you get over there?" he asked.

"Crawled. I couldn't abide just sitting. I feel a lot better already."

"That was very imprudent," he said quickly. "We'll never get out of here until you can use that foot."

"Oh! I hadn't thought of that," demurely. "I'll try to be careful. Did you bring my shoe—and legging?"

He held them out for her inspection.

"You'd better not try to put them on—not to-night, anyway. To-morrow, perhaps——"

"To-morrow!" She looked up at him, and then at the frames of the lean-to, as though the thought that she must spend the night in the woods had for the first time occurred to her. A deep purple shadow was crawling slowly up from the eastward and only the very tops of the tallest trees above them were catching the warm light of the declining sun. The woods were dimmer now and distant trees which a moment ago had been visible were merged in shadow. Some of the birds, too, were beginning to trill their even-song.

"Yes," he went on, "you see it's getting late. There's hardly a chance of any one finding us to-night. But we're going to make out nicely. If you really insist on cleaning those fish——"

"I do—and on making some tea——"

"Then I must get the stuff for your bed before it's too dark to see."

He filled the saucepan with water at the stream, then turned back into the woods for the cedar twigs.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"The bed comes first," he muttered to himself. "That's what Joe would say. There's caribou moss up on the slope and the balsam is handy. It isn't going to rain to-night, but I'll try to build a shelter anyway—boughs now—and canoe birches to-morrow, if I can find any. But I've got to hustle."

Six pilgrimages he made into the woods, bringing back each time armloads of boughs and twigs. He was conscious presently of a delicious odor of cooking food; and long before he had brought in his last armful, she pleaded with him to come and eat. But he only shook his head and plunged again into the bushes. It was almost dark when he finished and threw the last load on the pile he had made. When he approached he found her sitting motionless, watching him, both creels beside her, her hand holding up to the fire a stick which stuck through the fish she had cooked. The saucepan was simmering in the ashes.

"How do they taste?" he asked cheerfully.

"I haven't eaten any."

"Why not?"

"I was waiting for you."

"Oh, you mustn't do that," sharply. "I didn't want you to wait."

"You know," she interrupted, "I'm your guest."

"I didn't know it," he laughed. "I thought I was yours. It's *your* saucepan——"

"But *your* fish——" she added, and then indicating a little mischievously, "except that biggest one—which was mine. But I'm afraid they'll be cold—I've waited so long. You must eat at once, you're awfully tired."

"Oh, no, I've still got a lot to do. I'll just take a bite and——"

"Please sit down—you *must*, really."

BABES IN THE WOODS

Her fingers touched the sleeve of his shirt and he yielded, sinking beside her with an unconscious sigh of relaxation which was more like a groan. He was dead-tired—how tired he had not known until he had yielded. She saw the haggard look in his eyes and the lines which the firelight was drawing around his cheek-bones, and at the corners of his mouth; and it came to her suddenly that he might not be so strong as she had thought him. If he was an invalid from the South, the burden of carrying her through the woods might easily have taxed his strength. She examined his face critically for a moment, and then fumbling quickly in the pocket of her dress drew forth a small, new-looking flask, which gleamed brightly in the firelight.

“Here,” she said kindly, “take some of this, it will do you good.”

Gallatin followed her motion wearily. Her hand had even reached the cap of the bottle and had given it a preparatory twist before he understood what it all meant. Then he started suddenly upright and put his fingers over hers.

“No!” he muttered huskily. “Not that—I—I don’t—I won’t have anything—thank you.”

And as she watched his lowering brows and tightly drawn lips—puzzled and not a little curious, he stumbled to his feet and hurriedly replaced a log which had fallen from the fire. But when a moment later he returned to his place, his features bore no signs of discomposure.

“I think I’m only hungry,” he mumbled.

She unhooked the largest fish from the stick and handed it to him daintily.

“There, that’s yours. I’ve been saving it for you—just to convince you that I’m the better fisherman.”

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I don't doubt it," he said soberly. "I'm a good deal of a duffer at this game."

"But then," she put in generously, "you caught *more* than I did, and that evens matters."

They had begun eating now, and in a moment it seemed that food was the only thing they had lacked. As became two healthy young animals, they ate ravenously of the biscuits she had carried and all of the fish she had prepared, and then Gallatin cooked more. The girl removed the metal cup from the bottom of her flask and taking turn and turn about with the tiny vessel they drank the steaming tea. In this familiar act they seemed to have reached at once a definite and satisfactory understanding. Gallatin was thankful for that, and he was careful to put her still further at her ease by a somewhat obtrusive air of indifference. She repaid him for this consideration by the frankness of her smile. He examined her furtively when he could and was conscious that when his face was turned in profile, she, too, was studying him anxiously, as only a woman in such a situation might. Whatever it was that she learned was not unpleasing to her, for, as he raised his hand to carry the tea to his lips, her voice was raised in a different tone.

"Your hands!" she said. "They're all cut and bleeding."

He glanced at his broken knuckles impersonally.

"Are they? I hadn't noticed before. You see, I hadn't any hatchet."

"Won't you let me—hadn't you better bathe them in the water?"

"A bath wouldn't hurt them, would it?"

"I didn't mean that. Don't they hurt?"

"No, not at all. But I wish I had Joe's axe."

"Who's Joe?"

BABES IN THE WOODS

"My guide."

"Oh."

She questioned no further; for here, she realized instinctively, were the ends of the essential, the beginnings of the personal. And so the conversation quickly turned to practical considerations. Of one thing she was now assured—her companion was a gentleman. What kind of a gentleman she had not guessed, for there were many kinds, she had discovered; but there was nothing unduly alarming in his manner or appearance and she concluded for the present to accept him, with reservations, upon his face value.

His body fed, Gallatin felt singularly comfortable. The problems that had hung so thickly around his head a while ago, were going up with the smoke of the fire. Here were meat, drink and society. Were not these, after all, the end and aim of human existence? Had the hoary earth with all its vast treasures ever been able to produce more? He took his pouch from his pocket, and asking if he might smoke, lit his pipe with a coal from the fire (for matches were precious) and sank back at the girl's feet. The time for confidences, were there to be any, had arrived. She felt it in the sudden stoppage of the desultory flow of comment and in the polite, if appraising steadiness of his gaze.

"I suppose you have a right to know what I'm doing here," she said flushing a little, "but there isn't anything to tell. I left our camp—as you did, to fish. I've done it before, often. Sometimes alone—sometimes with a party. I—I wasn't alone this morning and I—I—" she hesitated, frowning. "It doesn't matter in the least about that, of course," she went on quickly. "I—I got separated from my—my companion and went farther into the brush than I had intended to do. When I found that

THE SILENT BATTLE

I had lost my way, I called again and again. Nobody answered. Then something happened to me, I don't know what. I think it must have been the sound of the echoes of my own voice that frightened me, for suddenly I seemed to go mad with terror. After that I don't remember anything, except that I felt I must reach the end of the woods, so that I could see beyond the barrier of trees which seemed to be closing in about me like living things. It was frightful. I only knew that I went on and on—until I saw you. And after that—” her words were slower, her voice dropped a note and then stopped altogether —“ and that is all,” she finished.

“It's enough, God knows,” he said, sitting upright. “You must have suffered.”

“I did—I wonder what got into me. I've never been frightened in the woods before.” She turned her head over her shoulder and peered into the shadows. “I don't seem to be frightened now.”

“I'm glad. I'm going to try to make you forget that. You're in no danger here. To-morrow I'll try to find my back trail—or Joe Keegón may follow mine. In the meanwhile”—and he started to his feet, “I've got a lot to do. Just sit quietly there and nurse your ankle while I make your bed. And if I don't make it properly, the way you're used to having it, just tell me. Won't you?”

“Hair, please, with linen sheets, and a down pillow,” she enjoined.

“I'll try,” he said with a laugh, for he knew now that the tone she used was only a cloak to hide the shrinking of her spirit. She sat as he had commanded, leaning as comfortably as she could against the tree trunk, watching his dim figure as it moved back and forth among the shadows. First he trod upon and scraped the ground, picking up small stones and twigs and throwing them into

BABES IN THE WOODS

the darkness until he had cleared a level spot. Then piece by piece he laid the caribou moss as evenly as he could. He had seen Joe do this some days ago when they had made their three-day camp. The cedar came next; and, beginning at the foot and laying the twig ends upward, he advanced to the head, a layer at a time, thus successively covering the stub ends and making a soft and level couch. When it was finished, he lay on it, and made some slight adjustments.

"I'm sorry it's not a pneumatic—and about the blankets—but I'm afraid it will have to do."

"It looks beautiful," she assented, "and I hate pneumatics. I'll be quite warm enough, I'm sure."

To make the matter of warmth more certain, he pitched two of the biggest logs on the flames, and then made a rough thatch of the larger boughs over the supports that he had set in position. When he had finished, he stood before her smiling.

"There's nothing left, I think—but to get to bed. I'm going off for enough firewood to last us until morning. Shall I carry you over now or——"

"Oh, I think I can manage," she said, her lips dropping demurely. "I did before—while you were away, you know." She straightened and her brows drew together. "What I'm puzzled about now is about *you*. Where are *you* going to sleep?"

"Me? That's easy. Out here by the fire."

"Ch!" she said thoughtfully.

III

VOICES

DRAGGING his lagging feet, Gallatin struggled on until his task was finished. He took the saucepan and cup to the stream, washed them carefully, and filled them with water. Then he untied the handkerchief from around his neck and washed that, too. When he got back to the fire, he found the girl lying on the couch, her head pillowed on her arm, her eyes gazing into the fire.

"I've brought some water. I thought you might like to wash your face," he said.

"Thanks," gratefully. "You're very thoughtful."

He mended the fire for the night, and waiting until she had finished her impromptu toilet, took the saucepan to the stream and rinsed it again. Then he cleared the remains of the fish away, hung the creels together on the limb of a tree and, without looking toward the shelter, threw himself down beside the fire, utterly exhausted.

"Good night," she said. He turned his head toward her. The firelight was dancing in her eyes, which were as wide open as his own.

"Good night," he said pleasantly, "and pleasant dreams."

"I don't seem to be a bit sleepy—are you?"

"No, not yet. Aren't you comfortable?"

"Oh, yes. It isn't that. I think I'm too tired to sleep."

VOICES

He changed his position a little to ease his joints. "I believe I am, too," he smiled. "You'd better try though. You've had a bad day."

"I will. Good night."

"Good night."

But try as he might, he could not sleep. Each particular muscle was clamoring in indignant protest at its unaccustomed usage. The ground, too, he was forced to admit was not as soft as it might have been, and he was sure from the way his hip bone ached, that it was on the point of coming through his flesh. He raised his body and removed a small flat stone which had been the cause of the discomfort. As he did so he heard her voice again.

"You're dreadfully unhappy. I don't see why——"

"Oh, no, I'm not. This is fine. Please go to sleep."

"I can't. Why didn't you make another bed for yourself?"

"I didn't think about it," he said, wondering now why the thought had never occurred to him. "You see," he lied cautiously, "I'm used to this sort of thing. I sleep this way very often. I like it."

"Oh!"

What an expressive interjection it was as she used it. It ran a soft arpeggio up the scale of her voice and down again, in curiosity rather than surprise, in protest rather than acquiescence. This time it was mildly skeptical.

"It's true—really. I like it here. Now I *insist* that you go to sleep."

"If you use that tone, I suppose I must." She closed her eyes, settled one soft cheek against the palm of her hand.

"Good night," she said again.

"Good night," he repeated.

THE SILENT BATTLE

Gallatin turned away from her so that she might not see his face and lay again at full length with his head pillowed on his arms, looking into the fire. His mental faculties were keenly alive, more perhaps by reason of the silence and physical inaction than they had been at any time during the day. Never in his life before, it seemed, had he been so broadly awake. His mind flitted with meddlesome agility from one thought to another; and so before he had lain long, he was aware that he was entirely at the mercy of his imagination.

One by one the pictures emerged—the girl's flight, the wild disorder of her appearance, her slender figure lying helpless in the leaves, the pathos of her streaming eyes, and the diminutive proportions of her slender foot. It was curious, too, how completely his own difficulties and discomforts had been forgotten in the mitigation of hers. Their situation he was forced to admit was not as satisfactory as his confident words of assurance had promised.

He had not forgotten that most of his back-trail had been laid in water, and it was not to be expected that Joe Keegón could perform the impossible. Their getting out by the way he had come must largely depend upon his own efforts in finding the spot up-stream where he had come through. The help that could be expected from her own people was also problematical. She had come a long distance. That was apparent from the condition of her gaiters. For all Gallatin knew, her camp might be ten, or even fifteen miles away. Something more than a mild curiosity possessed him as to this camp and the people who were using it; for there was a mystery in her sudden separation from the "companion" to whom she had so haltingly and vaguely alluded.

It was none of his business, of course, who this girl was or where she came from; he was aware, at this mo-

VOICES

ment of vagrant visions, of an unequivocal and not unpleasant interest in this hapless waif whom fortune, with more humor than discretion, had so unceremoniously thrust upon his mercies. She was very good to look at. He had decided that back in the gorge where she had first raised her elfin head from the leaves. And yet, now as he lay there in the dark, he could not for the life of him guess even at the color of her eyes or hair. Her hair at first had seemed quite dark until a shaft of the declining light in the west had caught it, when he had decided that it was golden. Her eyes had been too light to be brown and yet—yes, they had been quite too dark to be blue. The past perfect tense seemed to be the only one which suited her, for in spite of the evidences of her tangibility close at hand, he still associated her with the wild things of the forest, the timid things one often heard at night but seldom glimpsed by day. Cautiously he turned his head and looked into the shelter. She lay as he had seen her last, her eyes closed, her breath scarcely stirring her slender body. Her knees were huddled under her skirt and she looked no larger than a child. He remembered that when she had stood upright she had been almost as tall as he, and this metamorphosis only added another to the number of his illusions.

With an effort, at last, he lowered his head and closed his eyes, in angry determination. What the devil had the troubles of this unfortunate female to do with him? What difference did it make to him if her hair and eyes changed color or that she could become grown up or childish at will? Wasn't one fool who lost himself in the woods enough in all conscience! Besides *he* had a right to get himself lost if he wanted to. He was his own master and it didn't matter to any one but himself what became of him. Why couldn't the little idiot have stayed

THE SILENT BATTLE

where she belonged? A woman had no business in the woods, anyway.

With his eyes closed it was easy to shut out sight, but the voices of the night persisted. An owl called, and far off in the distance a solitary mournful loon took up the plaint. There were sounds close at hand, too, stealthy footfalls of minute paws, sniffs from the impertinent noses of smaller animals; the downward fluttering of leaves and twigs all magnified a thousandfold, pricked upon the velvety background of the vast silence. He tried to relax his muscles and tipped his head back upon the ground. As he did so his lids flew up like those of a doll laid upon its back. The moon was climbing now, so close to the tree tops that the leaves and branches looked like painted scrolls upon its surface. In the thicket shapes were moving. They were only the tossing shadows from his fire, he knew, but they interested him and he watched them for a long time. It pleased him to think of them as the shadows of lost travelers. He could hear them whispering softly, too, in the intervals between the other sounds, and in the distance, farther even than the call of the whip-poorwill, he could hear them singing:

À la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle
Que je m'y suis baigné
Il y a longtemps que le t'aime
Jamais je ne t'oublierai.

The sound of the rapids, too, or was it only the tinkle of the stream?

He raised his head and peered around him to right and left. As he did so a voice joined the lesser voices, its

VOICES

suddenness breaking the stillness like the impact of a blow.

"Aren't you asleep?" She lay as he had seen her before, with her cheek pillowed upon her hand, but the firelight danced in her wide-open eyes.

"No," he said, straightening slowly. "I don't seem to be sleepy."

"Neither am I. Did you hear them—the voices?"

"Yes," in surprise. "Did you? You're not frightened at all, are you?"

"Not at the voices. Other things seem to bother me much more. The little sounds close at hand, I can understand, too. There was a four-legged thing out there where you threw the fish offal a while ago. But you didn't see him——"

"I heard him—but he won't bother us."

"No. I'm not frightened—not at that."

"At what, then?"

"I don't—I don't think I really know."

"There's nothing to be frightened at."

"It—it's just *that* I'm frightened at—nothing—nothing at all."

A pause.

"I wish you'd go to sleep."

"I suppose I shall after a while."

"How is your foot?"

"Oh, better. I'm not conscious of it at all. It isn't my foot that keeps me awake. It's the hush of the stillnesses between the other sounds," she whispered, as though the silence might hear her. "You never get those distinctions sleeping in a tent. I don't think I've ever really known the woods before—or the meaning of silence. The world is poised in space holding its breath on the brink of some awful abyss. So I can't help holding mine, too."

THE SILENT BATTLE

She sat upright and faced him.

"You don't mind if I talk, do you? I suppose you'll think I'm very cowardly and foolish, but I want to hear a human voice. It makes things real somehow——"

"Of course," he laughed. He took out his watch and held it toward the fire with a practical air. "Besides its only ten o'clock."

"Oh," she sighed, "I thought it was almost morning."

He silently rose and kicked the fire into a blaze.

"It's too bad you're so nervous."

"That's it. I'm glad you called it by a name. I'm glad you looked at your watch and that you kicked the fire. I had almost forgotten that there were such things as watches. I seem to have been poised in space, too, waiting and listening for something—I don't know what—as though I had asked a great question which must in some way be answered."

Gallatin glanced at her silently, then slowly took out his pipe and tobacco.

"Let's talk," he said quietly.

But instead of taking his old place beside the fire, he sank at the foot of one of the young beech trees that formed a part of the structure of her shelter near the head of her balsam bed.

"I know what you mean," he said soothingly. "I felt it, too. The trouble is—there's never any answer. They'd like to tell us many things—those people out there," and he waved his hand. "They'd like to, but they can't. It's a pity, isn't it? The sounds are cheerful, though. They say they're the voyagers singing as they shoot the rapids."

She watched his face narrowly, not doubtfully as she

VOICES

had done earlier, but eagerly, as though seeking the other half of a thought which conformed to her own.

"I'm glad you heard," she said quickly. "I thought I must have dreamed—which would have been strange, since I haven't been asleep. It gives me a greater faith in myself. I haven't been really frightened, I hope. Only filled with wonder that such things could be."

"They can't really, you know," he drawled. "Some people never hear the voices."

"I never did before."

"The woods people hear them often. It means," he said with a smile, "that you and I are initiated into the Immortal Fellowship."

"Oh!" in a whisper, almost of awe.

"Yes," he reassured her gaily, "you belong to the Clan of *Mak-wa*, the Bear, and *Kee-way-din*, the North-Wind. The trees are keeping watch. Nothing can harm you now."

Her eyes lifted to his, and a hesitating smile suddenly wreathed her lips.

"You're very comforting," she said, in a doubtful tone which showed her far from comforted. "I really would try to believe you," with a glance over her shoulder, "if it wasn't for the menace of the silence when the voices stop."

"The menace——"

"Yes. I can't explain. It's like a sudden hush of terror—as though the pulse of Nature had stopped beating—was waiting on some immortal decision."

"Yes," he assented quietly, his gaze on the fire. "I know. I felt that, too."

"Did you? I'm glad. It makes me more satisfied."

She was sitting up on her bed of twigs now, leaning

THE SILENT BATTLE

toward him, her eyes alight with a strange excitement, her body leaning toward his own, as she listened. The firelight danced upon her hair and lit her face with a weird, wild beauty. She was very near him at that moment—spiritually—physically. In a gush of pity he put his hand over hers and held it tightly in his own, his voice reassuring her gently.

“No harm can come to you here, child. Don’t you understand? There are no voices—but yours and mine. See! The woods are filled with moonlight. It is as bright as day.”

She had put one arm before her eyes as though by physical effort to obliterate the fancies that possessed her. Her hand was ice-cold and her fingers unconsciously groped in his, seeking strength in his warm clasp. With an effort she raised her head and looked more calmly into the shadows.

“No, there are no voices now,” she repeated. “I am—foolish.” And then aware of his fingers still holding hers, she withdrew her hand abruptly and straightened her slender figure. “I—I’m all right, I think.”

He straightened slowly, and his matter of fact tone reassured her.

“I didn’t know you were really frightened or I shouldn’t have spoken so. I’m sorry.”

“But you *heard*,” she persisted.

Gallatin took up his pipe and put it in his mouth before he replied.

“The wilderness is no place for nerves—or imaginations. It seems that you have the one and I the other. There were no sounds.”

“What did I hear then?”

“The stream and the leaves overhead. I’d rather prove it to you by daylight.”

VOICES

"Will the day never come?"

"Oh, yes. I suppose so. It usually does."

There was no smile on his lips and another note in his voice caused her to look at him keenly. The bowl of his pipe had dropped and his gaze was fixed upon the fire. It was a new—and distinct impression that he made upon her now—a not altogether pleasant one. Until a moment ago, he had been merely a man in the woods—a kindly person of intelligence with a talent for the building of balsam beds; in the last few minutes he had developed an outline, a quite too visible personality, and instinctively she withdrew from the contact.

"I think I can sleep now," she said.

He understood. His place was at the fireside and he took it without reluctance, aware of a sense of self-reproach. It had been her privilege to be a fool—but not his. He threw a careless glance at her over his shoulder.

"If you're still timid, I'll sit up and watch."

"No, you mustn't do that." But by this time he had taken another coal for his pipe and sitting, Indian-fashion, was calmly puffing.

"I'm going to, anyway," he said. "Don't bother about me, please."

Without reply she stretched herself on the couch and disposed herself again to sleep. This time she buried her head in her arms and lay immovable. He knew that she was not asleep and that she was still listening for the menace of the silences; but he knew, too, that if suffer she must, he could not help her. A moment ago he had been on the point of taking her in his arms and soothing her as he would have done a child. They had been very close in spirit at that moment, drawn together like two vessels alone in a calm waste of water. It was the appeal

THE SILENT BATTLE

of her helplessness to his strength, his strength to her helplessness, of course, and yet——

For a long while Gallatin watched the flames as they rose and fell and the column of smoke that drifted upward on the still night air and lost itself among the leaves overhead. The voices he heard no more. The fire crackled, a vagrant breeze sighed, a bird called somewhere, but he realized that he was listening for another sound. The girl had not moved since he had last spoken, and now he heard the rhythmic breathing which told him that at last she was asleep. He waited some moments more, then softly arose, took up his coat, which he had thrown over a log, and laid it gently over her shoulders. Then he crept back to his fire.

IV

EDEN

DAWN stalked solemnly forth and the heavens were rosy with light. Gallatin stirred uneasily, then raised his head stiffly, peered around and with difficulty got himself into a sitting posture. Fire still glowed in the chinks of the largest log, but the air was chill. He took out his watch and looked at it, winding it carefully. He had slept five hours, without moving.

He was now accustomed to the convention of awaking early, with all his faculties keenly alive; and he rose to his feet, rubbing the stiffness out of his limbs and back, smiling joyously up at the gracious day. In the shelter, her back toward the fire, her head hidden in her arms, the girl still slept soundly. Cautiously Gallatin replenished the fire, piling on the last of his wood. Save for a little stiffness in his back, there were, it seemed, no penalties to be imposed for his night in the open.

A shaft of sunlight shot across the topmost branches of the trees, and instantly, as though at a signal, the woods were alive with sound. There was a mad scampering in the pine boughs above him, and a squirrel leapt into the air, scurried through the branches of a maple and disappeared; two tiny wrens engaged in a noisy discussion about the family breakfast, a blue-jay screamed and a woodpecker tattooed the call to the business of the day. This, Gallatin knew, was meant for him. There was much to be done, but he fell to with a will, his muscles eager for the task, his mind cleared of the fogs of doubt and

THE SILENT BATTLE

speculation which had dimmed it the night before. There were no problems he could not solve alone, no difficulties his ingenuity could not surmount. The old blood of his race, which years before had conquered this same wilderness, or another one like it, surged new in his veins and he rejoiced in the chance to test his strength against the unhandseled matter which opposed him. The forest smiled upon him, already gracious in defeat.

He returned to camp after a turn through the woods, and in one hand was a clean sliver of birch-bark, filled with blueberries. He put them safely in a hollow place in the fallen tree, filled the saucepan with water and placed it in the fire to boil. Then he cleaned fish.

He worked noiselessly, bringing more firewood, plenty of which was still close at hand; and after a glance at the sleeping girl, he unsheathed his knife and went again into the brush. There, after a search, he found what he was looking for—a straight young oak tree, about two inches in diameter. He succeeded at last, with much pains and care for his knife, in cutting it through and trimming off the small branches. At the upper end of this club was a V-shaped crotch, made by two strong forking branches, which he cut and whittled until they were to his liking. Returning to the fire, he emptied his fly-hook, took his rod and unreeled a good length of line, which he cut off and placed on the log beside him. Then with the line, he bound the fly-hook, stuffed with caribou moss, into the fork of his stick, wrapping the strong cord carefully until he had made a serviceable crutch. He was hobbling around near the fire on it, testing its utility when he heard a gasp of amazement. He had been so engrossed in his task that he had not thought of the object of these attentions, and when he glanced toward the shelter, she was sitting upright, regarding him curiously.

EDEN

"What on earth are you doing?"

He laughed gayly.

"Good morning! Hobbling, I believe. Don't I do it nicely?"

"You—you've hurt yourself?"

He took the crutch from under his arm and looked at it admiringly.

"Oh, no—but *you* have."

"I! Oh, yes. I forgot. I don't think I'll need it at all. I—" She started up and tried to put her foot down and then sank back in dismay. "It seems to still hurt me a little," she said quietly.

"Of course it does. You don't get over that sort of thing in a minute. It will be better when the blood gets into it. Meanwhile," he handed her the stick, "you must use this. Breakfast will be ready in a minute, so if you feel like making a toilet——"

"Oh, yes, of course," she glanced around her at the patines of gold the sun had laid over the floor of their breakfast-room and asked the time.

"Half past seven."

"Then I've slept——"

"Nearly nine hours."

He started forward to help her to her feet and as he did so, she saw his coat, which had fallen from her shoulders.

"You shouldn't have given me your coat. You must have frozen."

"On the contrary, I was quite comfortable. The night was balmy—besides, I was nearer the fire."

"I'm very much obliged," she said. After one or two clumsy efforts she managed to master her crutch and, refusing his aid, made her way to the stream without difficulty.

THE SILENT BATTLE

Gallatin spitted the fish on the charred sticks of yesterday and held them up to the fire, his appetite pleasantly assertive at the first delicious odor. When the girl joined him a while later, all was ready, the last of the tea darkening the simmering pot, the cooked fish lying in a row on a flat stone in the fire.

As she hobbled up he rose and offered her a place on the log beside him.

"I hope you're hungry. I am. Our menu is small but most select—blueberries Ojibway, trout *sauté*, and Bohea *en casserole*. The biscuits, I'm ashamed to say, are no more."

She reflected his manner admirably. "Splendid! I fairly dote on blueberries. Where did you get them? You're really a very wonderful person. For luncheon, of course, cress and dandelion salad, fish and a venison pasty. For dinner——"

"Don't be too sure," he laughed. "Let's eat what we've got and be thankful."

"I am thankful," she said, picking at the blueberries. "I might have been still lying over there in the leaves." She turned her face confidingly to his. "Do you know, I thought you were a bear."

"Did you?"

"Until you pointed a pistol at me—and then I thought you were an Indian."

"I'm very sorry. I didn't know *what* you were—I don't think I quite know yet."

She took the cup of tea from his fingers before she replied.

"I? Oh, I'm just—just a girl. It doesn't matter much who or what."

"I didn't mean to be inquisitive," he said quickly.

"But you were——" she insisted.

EDEN

"Yes," he admitted, "I'm afraid I was."

"Names don't matter—here, do they? The woods are impersonal. Can't you and I be impersonal, too?"

"I suppose so, but my curiosity is rather natural—under the circumstances."

"I don't intend to gratify it."

"Why not? My name——"

"Because—I prefer not," she said firmly. And then: "These fish are delicious. Some more tea, please!"

He looked at her while she drank and then took the cup from her hand without replying. Her chin he discovered could fall very quickly into lines of determination. Her attitude amused him. She was, it seemed, a person in the habit of having things her own way and it even flattered him that she had discerned that he must acquiesce.

"You shall have your own way," he laughed amusedly, "but if I call you 'Hey, there,' don't be surprised."

"I won't," she smiled.

When they had finished the last of the tea he got up, washed the two dishes at the stream, and relit the ashes of last night's pipe.

"The Committee of Ways and Means will now go into executive session," he began. "I haven't the least idea where we are. I may have traveled ten miles yesterday or twenty. I've lost my bearings, that's sure, and so have you. There are two things to do—one of them is to find our way out by ourselves and the other is to let somebody find it for us. The first plan isn't feasible until you are able to walk——"

"I could manage with my crutch."

"No, I'm afraid that won't do. There's no use starting off until we know where we're going."

"But you said you thought you could——"

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I still think so," he put in quickly, noting the sudden anxious query in her eyes. "I'll find my back-trail, but it may take time. Meanwhile you've got to eat, and keep dry."

"It isn't going to rain."

"Not now, but it may any time. I'll get you comfortable here and then I'll take to the woods——"

"And leave me alone?"

"I'm afraid I'll have to. We have four fish remaining—little ones. Judging by my appetite they're not quite enough for lunch—and we must have more for supper."

"I'll catch them."

"No, you must rest to-day. I have my automatic, too," he went on. "I'm not a bad shot. Perhaps, I may bring some meat."

"But I can't stay here and—do nothing."

"You can help fix the shack. I'll get the birch now."

He was moving off into the brush when she called him back.

"I hope you didn't think me discourteous awhile ago. I really didn't mean to be. You—you've been very good. I don't think I realized that we might have to be here long. You understand—under the circumstances, I thought I'd rather not—have you know anything about me. It doesn't matter, really, I suppose."

"Oh, no, not at all," politely, and he went into the underbrush, leaving her sitting at the fire. When he came back with his first armful of canoe birches, she was still sitting there; but he went on gathering birch and firewood, whistling cheerfully the while. She watched him for a moment and then silently got up with the aid of her crutch and reached for her rod and creel. She had hobbled past him before he realized her intention.

EDEN

"I wish you wouldn't," he protested. at

"I must do my share——"

"You'd do it better by saving your foot."

"I won't hurt my foot. I can use it a little now."

"If you slipped, things might go badly with you."

"I won't fall. I'm going down stream to get the fish for lunch."

She adjusted her crutch and moved on. Her voice was even gay, but there was no denying the quality of her resolution. He shrugged his shoulders lightly and watched her until she had disappeared in the bushes, and when he had finished his tasks, he took up rod and creel and followed the stream in the opposite direction.

Of course, she had every right to keep her identity a secret, if she chose, but it annoyed him a little to think that he had laid himself open even to so slight a rebuff. Morning seemed to have made a difference in the relations, a difference he was as yet at some pains to define. Last night he had been merely a chance protector, upon whose hospitality she had been forced against her will and he had done only what common humanity demanded of him. The belief that her predicament was only temporary, had for the time given her the assurance the situation required; but with the morning, which had failed to bring aid she had expected from her people, her obligations to him were increasing with the hours. If, as he had indicated, it might be several days or even more before she could find her way to camp, she must indeed expect to find herself completely upon his mercies. Gallatin smiled as he cast his line. With its other compensations daylight had not brought him or his companion the pleasure of an introduction! Silly little fool! Of what value were introductions in the heart of the ancient wood—or else—

THE SILENT BATTLE

where for that matter! No mere spoken words could purge his heart—or any man's! Vain conventions! The hoary earth was mocking at them.

A swirl in the brown pool below him, a flash of light! Gallatin swore softly. Two pounds and a half at least! And he had lost him!

This wouldn't do. He was fishing for his dinner now—their dinner. He couldn't afford to make many more mistakes like that—not with another mouth to fill. Why should he care who or what she was! The Gallatins had never been of a curious disposition and he wondered that he should care anything about the identity of this chance female thrown upon his protection. She was not in any way unusual. He was quite sure that any morning in New York he would have passed a hundred like her on the street without a second glance. She had come with the falling evening, wrapped in mystery and had shaken his rather somber philosophy out of its bearings. Night had not diminished the illusion; and once, when the spell of the woods had held them for a moment in its thrall, he had been on the point of taking her in his arms. Did she know how near she had been to that jeopardy? He fancied so. That was why things were different to-day. It was the sanity of nine o'clock in the morning, when there was no firelight to throw shadows among the trees and the voyageurs no longer sang among the rapids. In an unguarded moment she had shown him a shadowed corner of her spirit and was now resenting it. A woman's chief business in life, he realized, was the hiding of her own frailties, the sources of impulse and the repression of unusual emotions. She had violated these canons of her sex and justly feared that he might misinterpret her. What could she know of him, what expect—of a casual stranger into whose arms her helpless plight had literally

EDEN

thrown her? He was forced to admit, at the last, that to a modest woman the situation was trying.

He fished moodily, impatiently and unsuccessfully, losing another fish in the pool above. Things were getting serious. His mind now intent, he cast again farther up, dropping the fly skillfully just above a tiny rapid. There he was rewarded; for a fish struck viciously, not so large a one as the first, but large enough for one meal for his companion at least. His spirits rose. He was at peace again with the world, in the elysium of the true fisher who has landed the first fish of the day.

A moment ago he had thought her commonplace. He admitted now that he had been mistaken. A moment ago he had been trying to localize her by the token of some treacherous trick of speech or intonation and had almost been ready to assign her to that limbo of all superior indigenous New Yorkers—"the West"; now he was even willing to admit that she was to all intents and purposes a cosmopolitan. The sanity of nine o'clock in the morning had done away with all myth and moonshine, but daylight had, it seemed, taken nothing from her elfin comeliness. Her hair had at last decided to be brown, her eyes a dark blue, her figure slim, her limbs well proportioned, her motions graceful. Altogether she had detracted nothing from the purely ornamental character of the landscape.

These few unimportant facts clearly established, Galatin gave himself up more carefully to the business in hand, and by the time he reached the head of the gorge, had caught an even dozen. If fish were to serve them for diet, they would not go hungry on this day at least. As he went higher up into the hills he kept his eyes open for the landmarks of yesterday. He remembered the two big rocks in the gorge, and it surprised him that

THE SILENT BATTLE

they were no nearer to his camp. The task of finding his back trail to Joe Keegón would be more difficult than he had supposed, and he knew now that the point where he had first fished this stream was many miles above. But he saw no reason to be unduly alarmed. He had served his apprenticeship; and with an axe and a frying pan, a kettle, some flour, tea, and a tin cup or two, his position would have had no terrors.

Beyond the gorge he had a shot at a deer and the echoes derided him, for he missed it. He shot again at smaller things and had the luck to bring down two squirrels; then realizing that his cartridges were precious, made his way back to camp.

The girl was already at the fire, her crutch beside her against the fallen log.

"I thought you were never coming." She smiled. "I heard your shooting and it frightened me."

Gallatin held the squirrels out for her inspection.

"There!" he said.

"Poor little things, what a pity! They were all so happy up there this morning."

"I'm afraid it can't be helped. We must eat, you know. Did you have any luck?"

She opened her creel and showed him.

Again she had caught more than he.

He laughed delightedly. "From this moment you are appointed Fish-wife Extraordinary. I fish no more. When my cartridges are used I'll have nothing to do but sit by the fire."

"Did you find your trail?" she asked anxiously.

"I followed it for a mile or so. I'm afraid I'll have to start early to-morrow. I want to see you comfortable first."

His manner was practical, but she did not fail to catch

EDEN

the note of uncertainty in his voice. She bent her gaze on the ground, and spoke slowly.

"You're very kind to try to keep me in ignorance, but I think I understand now. We will be here a long time."

"Oh, I didn't mean that. I don't think that," cheerfully. "If I were more experienced, I would promise to find my own guide to-morrow. I'm going to do the best I can. I won't come back here until I have to acknowledge myself beaten. Meanwhile, many things may happen. Your people will surely——"

"We are lost, both of us—hopelessly," she persisted. "The fish strike here as though these streams had never been fished before. My people will find me, if they can; if they can't—I—I—must make the best of my position."

She spoke bravely, but there was a catch in her voice that he had heard before.

"I'll do the best I can. I want you to believe that. Three or four days at the most and I'm sure I can promise you——"

"I'd rather you wouldn't promise," she said. "We'll get out someday, of course, and if it wasn't for this provoking foot——"

"Isn't it better?"

"Oh, yes—better. But, of course, I can't bear my weight on it. It's so tiresome."

She seemed on the point of tears, and while he was trying to think of something to say to console her, she reached for her crutch and bravely rose.

"I'm not going to cry. I abominate whining women. Give me something to do, and I won't trouble you with tears."

"You're plucky, that's certain," he said admiringly. "The lunch must be cooked. We'll save the squirrels for supper. I'm going to work on your house. I'm afraid

THE SILENT BATTLE

there's no tea—no real tea, but we might try arbor-vitæ. They say its palatable.”

She insisted on cleaning the fish and preparing the meal while he sat beside her and began sewing two rolls of thick birch-bark together with white spruce-roots. Between whiles she watched him with interest.

“I never heard of sewing a roof before,” she said with a smile.

“It's either sewing the roof or reaping the whirlwind,” he laughed. “It may not rain before we get out of here, but I think it's best not to take any chances. The woods are not friendly when they're wet. Besides, I'd rather not have any doctor's bills.”

“That's not likely here,” she laughed. “And the lunch is ready,” she announced.

All that afternoon he worked upon her shelter and by sunset it was weather-tight. On three sides and top it was covered with birches, and over the opening toward the fire was a projecting eave which could be lowered over one side as a protection from the wind. When he had finished it he stood at one side and examined his handiwork with an approving eye.

She had already thanked him many times.

“Of course, I don't know how to show my gratitude,” she said again.

“Then don't try.”

“But you can't sleep out again.”

“Oh, yes, I can. I'm going to anyway.”

“You mustn't.”

He glanced up at her quizzically.

“Why not?”

“I want to take my share.”

“I'm afraid you can't. That house is yours. You're going to sleep there. I'm afraid you'll have to obey or—

EDEN

ders," he finished. "You see, I'm bigger than you are."

Her eyes measured his long limbs and her lips curved in a crooked little smile.

"I don't like to obey orders."

"I'm afraid you must."

"You haven't any right to make yourself uncomfortable."

"Oh, yes, I have," he said. "Might is right—in the woods."

Something in the way he spoke caused her to examine his face minutely, but his eyes were laughing at her.

"Oh!" she said meekly.

V

WOMAN AND MAN

THERE were no voices in the woods that night, or if there were any the girl in the lean-to did not hear them. The sun had already found its way past the protecting flap of her shack before she awoke. The first thing she discovered was that at some time during the night he had put his coat over her again. She held it for a moment in her fingers thinking, before she rose; then got up quickly and peered out. The morning was chill, but the fire showed signs of recent attention and on the saucepan which had been placed near the fire a piece of birch-bark was lying. She picked it up curiously to read a hastily pencilled scrawl:

“I’m off up country. I must go far, so don’t be frightened if I’m not back for supper. Be careful with your foot—and keep the fire going. There are fish and firewood enough to last. Nothing can harm you. With luck I’ll bring my guide and duffel-bag.”

She glanced quickly over her shoulder into the depths of the pine-woods in the direction he must have taken as though she hoped to see him walking there; then, the birch-bark still in her hands, sat down on the log, read the message over again, smiling. She had begun to understand this tall young man, with the grim, unshaven face and somber, peering eyes. Those eyes had frightened her at first; and even now the memory of them haunted her until she recalled just what they did when he smiled,

WOMAN AND MAN

and then remembered that she was not to be frightened any more.

He had been gone for several hours. She knew this by the condition of the fire, but wondered why he had not spoken more definitely about his plans the night before. Possibly he had been afraid that she would not have slept. She *had* slept, soundly, dreamlessly, and she found herself wondering how she could have done so. The last thing she could recall was looking out through sleepy eyes at his profile as he sat motionless by the fire staring into the shadows. She knew then that fear of him had passed and that had she slept under a city roof she could not have been more contented to sleep securely.

He would be gone all day, of course, and she must depend upon her own exertions. First she filled the little saucepan with water and put it between the two flat stones that served for its hearth, and then took from the creel two fish that he had cleaned the night before. Half way to the fire she paused, her crutch in mid-air, balancing herself safely without its aid. She peered to right and left among the branches and then put the fish back into the creel in quick decision.

A bath! She had been longing for it for two days! Her resolution made, she took up her crutch and hobbled down the stream, turning her head back over her shoulder in the direction of the camp as if she still feared she might have misread the birch-bark message. Warm with expectancy and the delight of the venture, she found a sheltered pool beneath the dense foliage and bathed her lithe young body in the icy water. Gasping for breath she splashed across the sandy pool and back again with half uttered cries of delight; and the Naiads and Oreads fitted fearfully among the trees whispering and peering cautiously at the slim white creature which had intruded

THE SILENT BATTLE

so fearlessly upon their secret preserves. The water was cold! Oh, so cold! With one last plunge which set her teeth chattering, the bather clambered up the bank into the sunlight chilled to the bone, but glowing suddenly with the swift rush of new blood along her rosy limbs. Upright upon the bank she moved vigorously back and forth, and releasing her hair, let it clothe and warm her, while she stood drying, her face toward the sun. Apollo looked with favor on this Clytië and sent his warmest rays that she might not have gazed at him in vain.

A miracle had happened to her ankle, too, for she moved quite without pain. Dressing and making her way back to the fire, using her crutch only as a staff, she gathered cedar by the way, for her morning tea. Her mentor had made some of it for her the night before and her lips twisted at the thought of drinking it again; but the essence of the woods, their balsam, their fragrance, their elixir had permeated her and even this bitter physic seemed palatable now. She remembered his couplet last night:

A quart of arbor-vitæ
To make you big and mighty.

At the fire she spitted her fish, leaning back against the log, her hair drying in the sun and wind, the warm fire bringing a warm glow throughout her body. She ate and then stretched her arms toward the kindly trees. It was good to be strong and young, with life just ripening. At that moment it did not matter just what was to become of her. She was sure that she no longer felt any uneasiness as to the end of her adventure. Her guardian had gone to find a way out. He would come back to-night. In time she would go back to camp. She didn't care when—the present seemed sufficient.

WOMAN AND MAN

In all ways save one—*she had no mirror*. She combed her hair with her back comb and braided it carefully with fingers long accustomed. Instinct demanded that she look at her face; circumstance refused her the privilege, for of Vanity Boxes she had none. And, when, like Narcissus, she knelt at the brink of the pool and looked into its depths, the water was full of iridescent wrinkles and she only saw the mocking pebbles upon the bottom, having not only her labor, but a wetting for her pains. But she accepted the reproof calmly and finished her toilet *secundum naturam*.

The larder was full, but she fished again—up stream this time, for evening might bring another mouth to feed. The morning dragged wearily enough and she came back to her fire early, with but four fish to her credit account. She hung the creel in its accustomed place and resumed her seat by the fire, her look moving restlessly from one object to another. At last it fell upon his coat which she had left on the couch in the shelter. She got up, brought it forth into the light and brushed it carefully. Several objects fell from its pockets—a tobacco pouch nearly empty, a disreputable and badly charred briar-wood pipe and some papers. She picked up the objects one by one and put them back. As she did so her eye caught the superscription of a letter. She drew it forth quickly and examined it again as though she had not been certain that she had read it correctly; then the other envelope, scanning them both eagerly. They were inscribed with the same name and address—all written with the same feminine scrawl, and the paper smelt of heliotrope. She held them in her fingers a moment, her lips compressed, her brow thoughtful and then abruptly thrust them into the pocket again and put the coat into the shelter.

THE SILENT BATTLE

She sat for a long while, her chin in her hand, looking into the ashes of the fire. A cloud moved slowly across the face of the sun, and its shadow darkened the glade. A hush fell upon the trees as though all living things had stopped to listen. The girl glanced at the sky and saw that the heavens were dark with the portent of a storm, when some new thought suddenly struck her, for she rose quickly, her look moving from the shack to the trees beside it, a pine and a maple tree, measuring the distance and the ground between them. Of one thing she was now certain, another shelter must be built at once.

Her crutch in her hand she made her way into the thicket, her small pearl handled knife clutched resolutely in her palm, attacking vigorously the first straight limb within reach. At the end of ten minutes she had cut only half way through it, and her tender hands were red and blistered. But she put her weight on the bough and snapped it, cutting at last through the tough fibers and dragging it into the open. Ten minutes more of cutting at the twigs and her roof joist was in position. Her next attempt was unfortunate; for she had hardly begun to cut a notch in the branch she had selected, when the knife-blade broke and the handle twisted in her hand, the jagged edge cutting a gash in her thumb. She cried out with pain, dropping the knife from trembling fingers. It was not a serious wound, but the few drops of blood made her think it so; and, pale and a little frightened, she made her way to the stream and dipped it into the cooling water, bathing and bandaging it with her handkerchief.

She had learned something. The woods were only friendly to those who knew how to cope with them. She did not know how to cope with them, and at this moment hated them blindly. There seemed to be nothing left but to sit by the fire and have a cry. This done, she felt

WOMAN AND MAN

better, but she made no further attempt to build the hut.

The sky darkened rapidly and a few drops of rain pattered noisily among the dry leaves. She had no means of learning the hour of the day. She guessed that it would soon be time to prepare supper, but for a long while she did not move. She was conquered by the inevitable facts of nature and her eyes plaintively regarded the beginnings of the house which might have been, but was not.

The fire, like her spirits of the morning, had sunk. But she rose now, her face set in hard little lines of determination, and laid on fresh logs. As the cheerful flames arose her spirits kindled, too, and she lifted the creels from the limb and sat down again in her accustomed place to prepare the scanty meal. Her eyes sought the up-country trail more frequently and more anxiously, but the shadows of the night had fallen thickly before she decided to cook her solitary meal. She was not hungry as she had been in the morning and even the odor of the cooking fish was not appetizing. She only cooked because cooking at this time seemed part of the established order of things and because cooking was something that belonged to the things that she could do.

She ate mechanically, rose and washed her utensils without interest. The rain was falling steadily; but she did not seem to care, and only when she had finished her tasks did she seek the shelter of the hut. Even then she stood leaning against the young birch-tree looking out at the darkness and listening, her brows puckered in tiny wrinkles of worry. At last with a sigh, she sank on her balsam bed and closed her eyes.

The night was sombrous and the rain had been falling for an hour. The girl sat beneath the shelter of her

THE SILENT BATTLE

projecting eave upon the ground, where she might look out up the stream, her chin on her knees, her hands clasped about her ankles, watching the rain drops fall glistening into the circle of firelight and hiss spitefully among the fretting flames. She had been crying again and her eyes were dark with apprehension. Her hair hung in moist wisps about her brow and temples and her lips were drawn in plaintive lines. She listened intently. A dead branch in the distance cracked and fell. She started up and peered out for the hundredth time in the direction from which she might expect his approach. Only the soft patter of the rain on the soaked foliage and the ominous blackness of before! She went out into the wet, heaping more logs upon the flames. The fire at least must be kept burning. He had asked that of her. That was her duty and she did it unquestioning like the solitary cliff-woman, awaiting in anxious expectation the return of her lord. She would not lie down upon her balsam bed; for that would mean that she denied the belief that he *would* return, and so she sat, her forehead now bent upon her knees, her eyes closed, only her ears acutely alive to the slightest distant sounds.

Suddenly she raised her head, her eyes alight. She heard sounds now, human sounds, the crunch of foot-falls in the moist earth, the snapping of fallen twigs. She ran out into the rain and called joyously. A voice answered. She ran forward to meet him. He emerged into the light striding heavily, bent forward under the weight of something he was carrying.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she cried, her voice trembling. "I had begun to fear—I don't know what. I thought—you—you—weren't coming back."

He grinned wearily. "I believe I'd almost begun to think so myself. Phew! But the thing is heavy!"

WOMAN AND MAN

He lowered it from his shoulders and threw it heavily near the fire.

"W—what is it?" she asked timidly.

"A deer. I shot it," he said laconically.

He straightened slowly, getting the kinks out of his muscles with an effort; and she saw that his face was streaked with grime and sweat and that his body in the firelight was streaming with moisture. His eyes peered darkly from deep caverns.

"Oh! You're so tired," she cried. "Sit down by the fire at once, while I cook your supper." And, as he made no move to obey her, she seized him by the arms and led him into the shelter of the hut and pushed him gently down upon the couch. "You're not to bother about anything," she went on in a businesslike way. "I'll have you something hot in a jiffy. I'm so—so sorry for you."

He sat in the bunk, with a drooping head, his long legs stretched toward the blaze.

"Oh, I'm all right," he grunted. But he watched her flitting to and fro with dull eyes and took the cup of water she offered him without protest. She spitted the fish skillfully, crouching on the wet log as she broiled them, while he watched her, half asleep with the grateful sense of warmth and relaxation. He did not realize until now that he had been on the move with little rest for nearly eighteen hours, during four of which he had carried a double burden.

The cedar tea she brought him first. He made a wry face but emptied the saucepan.

"By George, that's good! I never tasted anything better." He ate hungrily—like an animal, grumbling at the fish bones, while she cooked more fish, smiling at him. There was some of the squirrel left and he ate that, too, not stopping to question why she had not eaten it her-

THE SILENT BATTLE

self. Another saucepan of the tea, and he gave a great sigh of satisfaction and moved as though to rise. But she pushed him gently down again, fumbling meanwhile in the pockets of his coat which lay beside the bed.

"Your pipe—and tobacco," she said, handing them to him with a smile. "I insist, you deserve them," she went to the fire and brought him a glowing pine twig, and blew it for him until the tobacco was ready. In a moment he was puffing mechanically.

She sank quickly upon the dry ground beside him and he looked at her in amazement.

"I forgot," he muttered. "Your ankle!"

"It's well," she smiled. "I had forgotten it, too. I haven't used the crutch since morning."

"I'm glad of that, a day or two of rest and we'll soon be out of here."

He had not spoken of their predicament before, nor had she. It seemed as though in the delight of having him (or some one) near her, she had forgotten the object of his pilgrimage. He had not forgotten. His mind and body ached too sorely for him to forget his failure. She saw the tangle at his brows and questioned timidly.

"You had—had no luck?"

"No, I hadn't, and I went almost to the headwaters. I found no signs of travel anywhere, though I searched the right bank carefully. I thought I could remember—" he put his hand to his brow and drew his long fingers down his temple, "but I didn't."

"Don't worry about it. I'm not frightened now. In a day or two when I'm quite sure of my foot, we'll go out together. I think I really am—getting a little tired of fish," she finished smiling.

"I don't wonder. How would a venison steak strike you?"

WOMAN AND MAN

"Ah, I forgot. Delicious! You must be a very good shot."

"Pure luck. You see my eyes were pretty wide open to-day and the breeze was favoring. I got quite close to her and fired three times before she could start. After I shot she got away but I found some blood and followed. She didn't get far."

"Poor thing!" she said softly, her eyes seeking the dark shadow beyond the fire. "Poor little thing!"

He looked down at her, a new expression in his eyes; yesterday she had been a petulant, and self-willed child, creating a false position where none need have existed, diffident and pretentious by turns, self-conscious and unnatural. Tonight she was all woman. Under his tired lids he could see that—tender, compassionate, gentle, but strong—always strong. There were lines in her face, too, that he had not seen before. She had been crying. One of her hands, too, was bound with a handkerchief.

"You've hurt yourself again?" he asked.

"No—only a scratch. My knife—I—I was cutting"—hesitating—"cutting sticks for the fish."

If she had not hesitated, he might not have examined her so minutely. As it was she looked up at him irresolutely and then away. Over her head, beyond the edge of the shack, he saw the young pine-tree that she had placed for a roof support.

"Ah!" he muttered. But he understood. And knocking his pipe out against his heel, quietly rose. It was raining still, not gently and fitfully, as it had done earlier in the evening, but steadily, as though nature had determined to compensate with good measure for the weeks of clear skies that had been apportioned.

"I've got to get to work," he said resolutely.

"At what?"

THE SILENT BATTLE

"The shack you began——"

"No."

She answered so shortly that he glanced at her. Her head was turned away from him.

"I mean it," she insisted, still looking into the darkness. "You can do no more to-night. You must sleep here."

"You're very kind," he began slowly.

"No—I'm only just——" she went on firmly. "You're so tired that you can hardly get up. I'm not going to let you build that shack. Besides, you couldn't. Everything is soaking. Won't you sit down again? I want to talk to you."

Slowly he obeyed, dumb with fatigue, but inexpressibly grateful.

"I don't want you to think I'm a little fool," she said with petulant abruptness, as though denying an imputation. "I think I had a right to be timid yesterday and the day before. I was very much frightened and I felt very strangely. I don't know very many—many men. I was brought up in a convent. I don't think I quite knew what to—to expect of you. But I think I do now." She turned her gaze very frankly to his, a gaze that did not waver or quibble with the issue any more than her words did. "You've been very thoughtful—very considerate of me and you've done all that strength could do to make things easier for me. I want you to know that I'm very—very thankful."

He began to speak—but her gesture silenced him.

"It seems to me that the least I can do is to try and accept my position sensibly——"

"I'm sure you're doing that——"

"I'm trying to. I don't want you to think I've any nonsense left in my head—or false consciousness. I want

WOMAN AND MAN

you to treat me as you'd treat a man. I'll do my share if you'll show me how."

"You're more likely to show *me* how," he said.

"No. I can show you nothing but appreciation. I *do* that, don't I?"

"Yes—I hope I'll deserve it."

"I'm taking that risk," she said, with a winning laugh. "I'd have to be pretty sure of you, or I wouldn't be sitting here flattering you so."

"I hope you'll keep on," drowsily. "I like it."

"There! I knew it. I've spoiled you already. You'll be making me haul the fire-wood to-morrow."

"And cook breakfast," he put in sleepily. "Of course, I'll not stir out of here all day if you talk like this."

"Then I won't talk any more."

"Do, please, it's very soothing."

"I actually believe you're falling asleep."

"No—just dreaming."

"Of what?"

"Of the time a thousand years ago when you and I did all this before."

She looked at him with startled eyes.

"What made you say that?"

"Because I dreamed it."

"It's nonsense."

"I suppose it is. I'm—half—asleep."

She was silent a moment—her wide gaze on the fire.

"It's curious that you should say that."

"Why is it? I only told what I was dreaming of."

"You haven't any business dreaming such things."

"It all happened—all happened before," he muttered again. His head was nodding. He slept as he sat. She got up noiselessly and taking him by the shoulders low-

THE SILENT BATTLE

ered him gently to the bed. His lips babbled protestingly, but he did not wake, and in a moment he was breathing heavily in the deep sleep of exhaustion.

She stood beside him for a moment, smiling, and then softly sank upon the ground by his side, still watching. The rain had stopped falling, but outside the glistening circle of the firelight the water from the heavy branches dripped heavily. The heavens lightened and a bleary cloud opened a single eye and, blinking a moment, at last let the moonlight through. From every tree pendants of diamonds, festoons of opals were hung and flashed their radiance in the rising breeze, falling in splendid profusion. Over her head the drops pattered noisily upon the roof. After awhile, she heard them singly and at last silence fell again upon the forest.

It was her night of vigil and the girl kept it long. She was not frightened now. *Kee-way-din* crooned a lullaby, and she knew that the trees which repeated it were her friends. It was a night of mystery, of dreams and of a melancholy so sweet that she was willing even then to die with the pain of it.

And in the distance a voice sang faintly:

Le jour bien souvent dans nos bois
Hélas! le cœur plein de souffrance,
Je cherche ta si doux voix
Mais tout se tait, tout est silence
Oh! loin de toi, de toi que j'aime,
Dans les ennuis, ô mes amours,
Dans les regrets, douleur extreme,
Loin de toi je passe mes jours.

The girl at last slept uneasily, her head pillowed upon the cedar twigs beside the body of the man, who lay as

WOMAN AND MAN

he had first fallen, prone, his arms and legs sprawling. Twice during the night she got up and rebuilt the fire, for it was cold. Once a wolf sat just outside the circle of firelight grinning at her, not even moving at her approach, but she threw a stick at him and he slunk away. After that, she pulled the carcass of the deer into the opening of the hut and mounted guard over it until she was sure the wolf would not return. Then she lay down again and listened to the breathing of the man.

VI

THE SHADOW

THE third morning rose cold and clear. *Kee-wa-din* had brushed the heavens clean, and the rising sun was burnishing them. Orange and rose color vied for precedence in the splendid procession across the zenith, putting to flight the shadows of violet and purple which retreated westward in rout before the gorgeous pageantry of the dawn.

The girl stirred and started up at once, smiling hopefully at the radiant sky. Each tree awoke; each leaf and bough sent forth its fragrant tribute. Nature had wept, was drying her tears; and all the woods were glad.

The man still slept. The girl listened again for the sounds of his breathing, and then rose slowly and walked out. She shivered with the cold and dampness, for her feet had been wet the night before and were not yet dry, but the fire still glowed warmly. The damp twigs sputtered in protest as she put them on and a shaft of white smoke slanted down the wind, but presently the grateful crackling was followed by a burst of flame.

The explosion of a pine-knot awoke the sleeper in the hut, who rolled over on his couch, looking around him with heavy eyes, unable to put his thoughts together. A ray of sunlight fell upon the girl's face and rested there; and he saw that she was pale and that her hair had fallen in disorder about her shoulders. He understood then. He had slept upon *her* bed while she—for all he knew—had spent the night where he now saw her. He straightened,

THE SHADOW

struggled stiffly to his feet and stumbled out, rubbing his eyes.

She greeted him with a wan smile.

“Good morning,” she said. “I awoke first, you see.”

“I c-can’t forgive myself.”

“Oh, yes, you can, since I do.”

“I don’t know what to say to you.”

“You might say ‘good morning.’”

“I’ve been asleep,” he went on with a slow shake of his head, “while you lay—on the ground. I didn’t know. I only remember sitting there. I meant to get up——”

She laughed deliciously.

“But you couldn’t have—unless you had walked in your sleep.”

“I remember nothing.” He ran his blackened fingers through his hair. “Oh, yes, the trail—the deer—and—you cooking fish—and then—after that—we talked, didn’t we?”

He was awake now, and blundered forward eagerly to take the branch which she had lifted from the wood-pile. But she yielded grudgingly.

“I’m to do my share—that we agreed——”

“No—you’re a woman. You shall do nothing—go into the hut and rest.”

“I’m not tired.”

Her appearance belied her words. He looked down at her tenderly and laid his hand gently on her shoulder.

“You have not slept?”

“Oh, yes, I slept,” looking away.

“Why didn’t you wake me?”

“It wasn’t necessary.”

She smiled, but did not meet his gaze, which she felt was bent eagerly in search of her own.

“Where did you sleep?” he asked again.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"In the shelter—beside you."

"And I did not know! Do you think you can forgive me?"

She put her hand to her shoulder and gently removed his fingers. But his own seized hers firmly and would not let them go.

"Listen, please," he pleaded, "won't you? I want you to understand—many things. I want you to know that I wouldn't willingly have slept there for anything in the world. It's a matter of pride with me to make you comfortable. I'm under a moral obligation to myself—it goes deeper than you can ever guess—to bring you safely out of this, and give you to your people. You don't know how I've blessed the chance that threw you in my way—here—since I've been in the woods—that it happened to be my opportunity instead of some one else's who didn't need it as I did. I *did* need it. I can't tell you how or why, but I did. It doesn't matter who I am, but I want you to appreciate this much, at least, that I never knew anything of the joy of living until I found it here, the delight of the struggle to satisfy the mere pangs of healthy hunger—yours and mine, the wonderful ache of muscles stretched to the snapping point." He stopped, with a sharp sigh.

"Oh, I know you can't understand all this. I don't think I want you to—or why it hurts me to know that for one night at least you have suffered——"

"I do understand, I think," she murmured slowly. She had not looked at him, and her gaze sought the distant trees. "I did not suffer, though," she added.

"You had been crying—they hurt me, too, those anxious eyes of yours."

"I was afraid you might not come back, that was all," she said frankly. "I'm rather useless, you see."

THE SHADOW

He took her other hand and made her look at him.

"You felt the need of me?" he queried.

"Yes, of course," she said simply. "What would I have done without you?"

He laughed happily, "What wouldn't you have done—if you hadn't cut your finger?"

She colored and her eyes, in some confusion, sought the two trees which still bore the evidence of her ill-fated building operation.

"Yesterday, when I was away you started to build a shack for me," he went on. "It was your right, of course——"

"No, no," she protested, lowering her head. "I thought you'd like it so, I——"

"I understand," gently. "But it seems——"

"It was a selfish motive after all," she broke in again. "Your strength is more important than mine——"

He smiled and shook his head.

"You can't mislead me. Last night I learned something of what you are—gentle, courageous, motherly, self-effacing. I'll remember you so—always."

She disengaged her hands abruptly and took up the saucepan.

"Meanwhile, the breakfast is to be cooked——" she said coolly. There was no reproof in her tone, only good fellowship, a deliberate confirmation of her promises of the night before.

With a smile he took the saucepan from her hand and went about his work. It seemed that his failure yesterday to find a way out meant more to him this morning than it did to her. His limbs were heavy, too, and his body ached from top to toe; but he went to the brook and washed, then searched the woods for the blueberries that she liked and silently cooked the meal.

THE SILENT BATTLE

As he did not eat she asked him, "Aren't you hungry?"

"Not very."

He took up a fish and turned it over in his fingers. "I think I'll wait for the venison pasty."

"Don't you feel well?"

"Just a little loggy," that's all. "I think I slept too long."

She looked up at him suddenly, and then with friendly solicitude, laid her fingers lightly along his brow. The gesture was natural, gentle, so exquisitely feminine, that he closed his eyes delightedly, conscious of the agreeable softness of her fingers and the coolness of their touch.

"Your brow is hot," she said quickly.

"Is it?" he asked. "That's queer, I feel chilly."

"You've caught a bad cold, I'm afraid," she said, removing her fingers. "It's very—very imprudent of you."

Not satisfied with the rapidity of her diagnosis, he thrust his hand toward her for confirmation.

"I haven't any fever, have I?"

Her fingers lightly touched his wrist.

"I'm afraid so. Your pulse is thumping pretty fast."

"Very fast?"

"Yes."

"You must be mistaken."

"No, you have fever. You'll have to rest to-day."

"I don't want to rest. I couldn't if I wanted to."

"You *must!*" she said peremptorily. "There's nothing but the firewood. I can get that."

"There's the shack to build," he said.

"The shack must wait," she replied.

"And the deer to be butchered?"

She looked at the carcass and then put her fingers over her eyes. But she looked up at him resolutely.

THE SHADOW

"Yes," she persisted, "I'll do that, too—if you'll show me how."

He looked at her a moment with a soft light in his deep-set eyes and then rose heavily to his feet.

"It's very kind of you to want to make me an invalid," he said, "but that can't be. There's nothing wrong with me. What I want is work. The more I have the better I'll feel. I'm going to skin the deer." And disregarding her protests, he leaned over and caught up the hind-legs of the creature, dragging it into the bushes.

The effort cost him a violent throbbing in the head and pains like little needle pricks through his body. His eyes swam and the hand that held his knife was trembling; but after a while he finished his work, and cutting a strong young twig, thrust it through the tendons of the hind legs and carried the meat back to camp, hanging it high on a projecting branch near the fire.

She watched him moving slowly about, but covered her eyes at the sight of his red hands and the erubescant carcass.

"Don't you feel like a murderer?" she asked.

"Yes," he admitted, "I think I do; half of me does—but the hunter, the primitive man in me is rejoicing. There's an instinct in all of us that belongs to a lower order of creation."

"But it—it's unclean——"

"Then all meat is unclean. The reproach is on the race—not on us. After all we are only first cousins to the South-Sea gentlemen who eat one another," he laughed.

"I don't believe I can eat it," she shuddered.

"Oh, yes, you will—when you're hungry."

"I'll never eat meat again," she insisted. "Never! The brutality of it!"

"What's the difference?" he laughed. "In town

THE SILENT BATTLE

we pay a butcher to do our dirty work—here we do it ourselves. Our responsibilities are just as great there as here.”

“That’s true—I never thought of that, but I can’t forget that creature’s eyes.” And while she looked soberly into the fire, he went down to the stream and cleansed himself, washing away all traces of his unpleasant task. When he returned she still sat as before.

“Why is it?” she asked thoughtfully, “that the animal appetites are so repellent, since we ourselves are animals? And yet we tolerate gluttony—drunkenness among our kind? We’re only in a larva state after all.”

He had sunk on the log beside her for the comfort of the blaze, and as she spoke the shadows under his brows darkened with his frown and the chin beneath its stubble hardened in deep lines.

“I sometimes think that Thoreau had the right idea of life,” she said slowly. “There are infinite degrees of gluttony—infinite degrees of drunkenness. I felt shame for you just now—for myself—for the blood on your hands. I can’t explain it. It seemed different from everything else that you have done here in the woods, for the forest is clean, sweet-smelling. I did not like to feel ashamed for you. You see,” she smiled, “I’ve been rating you very highly.”

“No,” he groaned, his head in his hands. “Don’t! You mustn’t do that!”

At the somber note she turned and looked at him keenly. She could not see his face, but the fingers that hid it were trembling.

“You’re ill!” she gasped. “Your body is shaking.”

He sat up with an effort and his face was the color of ashes.

“No, it’s nothing. Just a chill, I think. I’ll be all *right in a minute.*”

THE SHADOW

But she put her arm around him and made him sit on the log nearest to the fire.

"This won't do at all," she said anxiously. "You've got to take care of yourself—to let me take care of you. Here! You must drink this."

She had taken the flask from her pocket and before he knew it had thrust it to his lips. He hesitated a moment, his eyes staring into space and then without question, drank deep, his eyes closed.

And as the leaping fires went sparkling through his body, he set the vessel down, screwed on the lid and put it on the log beside him. Two dark spots appeared beneath the tan and mounted slowly to his temples, two red spots like the flush of shame. An involuntary shudder or two and the trembling ceased. Then he sat up and looked at her.

"A mustard foot-bath and some quinine, please," he asked with a queer laugh.

But she refused to smile. "You slept in your soaking clothes last night," severely.

He shrugged his shoulders and laughed again.

"That's nothing. I've done that often. Besides, what else could I do? If you had wakened me——"

"That is unkind."

She was on the verge of tears. So he got to his feet quickly and shaking himself like a shaggy dog, faced her almost jauntily.

"I'm right as a trivet," he announced. "And I'm going to call you Hebe—the cup-bearer to the gods—or Euphrosyne. Which do you like the best?"

"I don't like either," she said with a pucker at her brow. And then with the demureness which so became her. "My name is—is Jane."

"Jane!" he exclaimed. "Jane! of course. Do you know I've been wondering, ever since we've been here what

THE SILENT BATTLE

name suited you best, Phyllis, Millicent, Elizabeth, and a dozen others I've tried them all; but I'm sure now that Jane suits you best of all. Jane!" he chuckled gleefully. "Yes, it does—why, it's *you*. How could I ever have thought of anything else?"

Her lips pouted reluctantly and finally broke into laughter, which showed her even white teeth and discovered new dimples.

"Do you really like it?"

"How could I help it? It's *you*, I tell you—so sound, sane, determined and a little prim, too."

"I'm *not* prim."

"Yes," he decided, "you're prim—when you think that you ought to be."

"Oh."

He seated himself beside her, looking at her quizzically as though she was a person he had never seen before—as though the half-identity she provided had invested her with new and unexpected attributes.

"It was nice of you to tell me. My name is Phil," he said.

"Is it?" she asked almost mechanically.

"Yes, don't you like it?"

Her glance moved quickly from one object to another—the shelter, the balsam bed, and the crutch which leaned against the door flap.

"Don't you like it?" he repeated eagerly.

"No," quietly. "It isn't like you at all:"

Probed for a reason, she would give none, except the woman's reason which was no reason at all. Only when he ceased probing did she give it, and then voluntarily.

"I'm afraid I'll have to change it then," he laughed.

"Yes, change it, please. The only Phils I've ever known were men of a different stripe—men without pur-

THE SHADOW

poses, without ambitions." And then, after a pause, "I believe you to be different."

"No! I have no purposes—no ambitions," he said glowering again at the fire.

"That is not true."

"How do you know?"

"Because you have ideals—of purity, of virtue, of courage."

"No," he mumbled, "I have no ideals. Life is a joke—without a point. If it has any, I haven't discovered it yet."

Her eyes sought his face in a vague disquiet, but he would not meet her look. The flush on his cheek had deepened, his gaze roved dully from one object to another and his fingers moved aimlessly upon his knees. She had proved him for three days, she thought, with the test of acid and the fire, but she did not know him at this moment. The thing that she had discovered and recognized as the clean white light of his inner genius had been suddenly smothered. She could not understand. His words were less disturbing than his manner, and his voice sounded gruff and unfamiliar to her ears.

She rose quietly and moved away, and he did not follow her. He did not even turn his head and for all she knew was not aware that she had gone. This was unlike him, for there had never been a moment since they had met when she could have questioned his chivalry, his courtesy or good manners. Her mind was troubled vaguely, like the surface of a lake which trembles at the distant storm.

A walk through the forest soothed her. The brook—her brook and his—sang as musically as before, the long drawn aisles had not changed, and the note of praise still swelled among the fretted vaults above. The birds made

THE SILENT BATTLE

light of their troubles, too, and the leaves were whispering joyously the last gossip of the wood. What they said she could not guess, but she knew by the warm flush that had risen to her cheeks that it must be personal.

When she returned to camp her arms were full of asters and cardinal flowers. He greeted her gravely, with an almost too elaborate politeness.

"I hope you'll forgive me," he begged her. "I don't think I'm quite myself to-day."

"Are you feeling better?" she questioned.

"Yes, I'm quite—quite comfortable. I was afraid I had offended you."

"Oh, no, I didn't understand you for a moment. That was all." She lifted the flowers so that he might see them better. "I've brought these for our lunch-table."

But he did not look at them. His eyes, still glowing unfamiliarly, sought only hers.

"Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, of course," lightly.

"I want—I want your friendship. I can't tell you how much. I didn't say anything that offended you, did I? I felt pretty seedy. Everything seemed to be slipping away from me."

"Not now?"

"Oh, no. I'm all right."

He took the flowers from her arms and laid them at the foot of a tree. Then coming forward he thrust out both his hands suddenly and took her by the elbows.

"Jane!" he cried, "Jane! Look up into my eyes! I want you to see what you've written there. Why haven't you ever seen it? Why wouldn't you look and read? It's madness, perhaps; but if it's madness, then *madness* is sweet—and all the world is mad with me.

THE SHADOW

There isn't any world. There's nothing but you and me—and Arcadia."

She had turned her gaze to the ground and would not look at him but she struggled faintly in his embrace. The color was gone from her cheeks now and beneath the long lashes that swept her cheek—one great tear trembled and fell.

"No, no—you mustn't," she whispered, stifling. "It can't—it mustn't be. I don't——"

But he had seized her more closely in his arms and shackled her lips with his kisses.

"I'm mad—I know—but I want you, Jane. I love you—I love you—I want the woods to hear——"

She wrenched one arm free and pushed away, her eyes wide, for the horror of him had dawned slowly.

"Oh!" she gasped. "*You!*"

As he seized her again, she drew back, mad with fear, shrunken within herself, like a snake in a thicket coiling itself to thrust and then struck viciously.

He felt the impact of a blow full in the face and staggered back releasing her. And her accents, sharp, cruel, vicious, clove the silence like sword-cuts.

"You cad! You brute! You utter brute!"

He came forward like a blind man, mumbling incoherently, but she avoided him easily, and fled.

"Jane!" he called hoarsely. "Come back to me, Jane. Come back to me! Oh, God!"

He stumbled and fell; then rose again, putting his hands to his face and running heavily toward the spot where she had vanished into the bushes—the very spot where three days ago she had appeared to him. He caught a glimpse of her ahead of him and blundered on, calling for forgiveness. There was no reply but the echo of his own voice, nor any glimpse of her. After that he

THE SILENT BATTLE

remembered little, except that he went on and on, tripping, falling, tearing his face and clothes in the briars, getting to his feet and going on again, mad with the terror of losing her—an instinct only, an animal in search of its wounded mate.

He did not know how long he strove or how far, but there came a time when he fell headlong among some boulders and could rise no more.

That morning two Indian guides in search of a woman who had been lost, met another Indian at the headwaters of a stream, and together they followed a fresh trail—the trail of a big man wearing hob-nailed boots and carrying a burden. In the afternoon they found an empty shack beside which a fire was burning. Two creels hung side by side near the fire and upon the limb of a tree was the carcass of a deer. There were many trails into the woods—some made by the feet of a woman, some by the feet of a man.

The three guides sat at the fire for awhile and smoked, waiting.

Then two of them got up and after examining the smaller foot-marks silently disappeared. When they had gone the third guide, a puzzled look on his face, picked up an object which had fallen under a log and examined it with minute interest. Then with a single guttural sound from his throat, put the object in his pocket and bending well forward, his eyes upon the ground, glided noiselessly through the underbrush after them.

VII

ALLEGRO

A STORM of wind and rain had fallen out of the Northwest, and in a night had blown seaward the lingering tokens of Autumn. The air was chill, the sunshine pale as calcium light, and distant buildings came into focus, cleanly cut against the sparkling sky at the northern end of the Avenue; jets of steam appeared overhead and vanished at once into space; flags quivered tensely at their poles; fast flying squadrons of clouds whirled on to their distant rendezvous, their shadows leaping skyward along the sunlit walls. In a stride Winter had come. The city had taken a new *tempo*. The *adagio* of Indian Summer had come to a pause in the night; and with the morning, the baton of winter quickened its beat as the orchestra of city sounds swung into the *presto* movement. Upon the Avenue shop-windows bloomed suddenly with finery; limousines and broughams, new or refurbished, with a glistening of polished nickel and brass, drew up along the curbs to discharge their occupants who descended, briskly intent on the business of the minute, in search of properties and backgrounds for the winter drama.

In the Fifth Avenue window of the Cosmos Club, some of the walking gentlemen gathered in the afternoon and were already rehearsing the familiar choruses. All summer they had played the fashionable circuit of house-parties at Narragansett, Newport and other brief stands, and all recounted the tales of the road, glad at last to

THE SILENT BATTLE

be back in their own corners, using the old lines, the old gestures, the old cues with which they had long been familiar.

If its summer pilgrimage had worked any hardship, the chorus at the windows of the Cosmos Club gave no sign of it. It was a well-fed chorus, well-groomed, well-tailored and prosperous. Few members of it had ever played a "lead" or wished to; for the tribulations of star-dom were great and the rewards uncertain, so they played their parts comfortably far up-stage against the colorful background.

Colonel Broadhurst took up the glass which Percy Endicott had ordered and regarded it ponderously.

"Pretty, aren't they?" he asked sententiously of no one in particular, "pretty, innocent, winking bubbles! Little hopes rising and bursting."

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," put in the thirsty Percy promptly. "Luck, Colonel!" and drank.

With a long sigh the Colonel lifted his glass. "Why do we do it?" he asked again. "There's nothing—positively nothing in it."

"You never said a truer thing," laughed Ogden Spencer, for the Colonel had set his empty glass upon the table.

"Oh, for the days of sunburnt mirth—of youth and the joyful Hippocrene!" the Colonel sighed again.

"Write—note—Chairman—House Committee," said Coleman Van Duyn, arousing from slumber, thickly, "mighty poor stuff here lately."

"Go back to sleep, Coley," laughed Spencer. "It's not your cue."

Van Duyn lurched heavily forward for his glass, and drank silently. "Hippocrene?" he asked. "What's Hippocrene?"

ALLEGRO

“Nectar, my boy,” said the Colonel pityingly, “the water of the gods.”

“Water!” and with a groan, “Oh, the Devil!”

He joined good naturedly in the laugh which followed and settled back in his leather chair.

“Oh, you laugh, you fellows. It’s no joke. Drank nothing but water for two months this summer. Doctors orders. Drove the water wagon, *I* did—two long months. Think of it!” The retrospect was so unpleasant that Mr. Van Duyn leaned forward immediately and laid his finger on the bell.

“Climb off, Coley?” asked Spencer.

“No, jumped,” he grinned. “Horse ran away.”

“You’re looking fit.”

“I am. Got a new doctor—sensible chap, young, ambitious, all that sort of thing. Believes in alcohol. Some people need it, you know. Can’t be too careful in choice of doctor. Wants me to drink Lithia water, though. What’s this Hippo—hippo—”

“Chondriac!” put in Percy.

“Hippocrene,” said Broadhurst severely.

“Sounds like a parlor car—or—er—a skin food. Any good, Colonel?”

“No,” said Colonel Broadhurst with another sigh, “It wouldn’t suit your case, Coley.”

A servant entered silently, took the orders and removed the empty glasses.

“Where were you, Coley?” asked Percy.

“Woods—Canada.”

“Fishing?”

“Yep—some.”

“See anything of Phil Gallatin?”

“No. I was with a big outfit—ten guides, call ’em servants, if you like. Air mattresses, cold storage plant,

THE SILENT BATTLE

chef, bottled asparagus tips, Charlotte Russe—fine camp that!”

“Whose?”

“Henry K. Loring. You know—coal.”

“Oh—I see. There’s a girl, isn’t there?”

“Yes.”

Van Duyn reached for his glass and lapsed into surly silence.

But Percy Endicott was always voluble in the afternoon.

“You didn’t hear about Phil?”

“No—not another——”

“Oh, no, he hasn’t touched a drop for weeks. Got lost up there. I heard the story at Tuxedo from young Benson who just come down. He had it from a guide. It seems that Phil got twisted somehow in the heart of the Kawagama country and couldn’t find his way back to camp. He’s not much of a woodsman—hadn’t ever been up there before, and the guide couldn’t pick up his trail——”

“Didn’t he lose his nerve?”

“Not he. He couldn’t, you see. There was a girl with him.”

“A girl! The plot thickens. Go on.”

“They met in the woods. She was lost, too, so Phil built a lean-to and they lived there together. Lucky dog! Idyllic—what?”

“Well, rather! Arcadia to the minute. But how did they get on?” asked the Colonel.

“Famously——”

“But they couldn’t live on love.”

“Oh, they fished and ate berries, and Gallatin shot a deer.”

“Lucky, lucky dog!”

ALLEGRO

"They'd be there now, if the guides hadn't found them."

"His guides?"

"Yes, and hers."

"Hers! She wasn't a native then?"

"Not on your life. A New Yorker—and a clinker. That's the mystery. Her guide came from the eastward but her camp must have been—why, what's the matter, Coley?"

Mr. Van Duyn had put his glass upon the table and had risen heavily from his easy chair, his pale blue eyes unpleasantly prominent. He pulled at his collar-band and gasped.

"Heat—damn heat!" and walked away muttering.

It was just in the doorway that he met Phil Gallatin, who, with a smile, was extending the hand of fellowship. He glowered at the newcomer, touched the extended fingers flabbily and departed, while Gallatin watched him go, not knowing whether to be angry or only amused. But he shrugged a shoulder and joined the group near the window.

The greetings were cordial and the Colonel motioned to the servant to take Gallatin's order.

"No, thanks, Colonel," said Gallatin, his lips slightly compressed.

"Really! Glad to hear it, my boy. It's a silly business." And then to the waiting-man: "Make mine a Swissesse this time. It's ruination, sir, this drinking when you don't want it—just because some silly ass punches the bell."

"But suppose you *do* want it," laughed Spencer.

"Then all the more reason to refuse."

Gallatin sank into the chair that Van Duyn had vacated. These were his accustomed haunts, these were

THE SILENT BATTLE

his associates, but he now felt ill at ease and out of place in their company. He came here in the afternoons sometimes, but the club only made his difficulties greater. He listened silently to the gossip of the widening group of men, of somebody's *coup* down town, of Larry Kane's trip to the Rockies, of the opening of the hunting season on Long Island, the prospects of a gay winter and the thousand and one happenings that made up the life of the leisurely group of men about him. The servant brought the tray and laid the glasses.

"Won't change your mind, Phil?" asked Colonel Broadhurst again.

Gallatin straightened. "No, thanks," he repeated.

"That's right," laughed the Colonel jovially. "The true secret of drinking is to drink when you don't want it—and refuse when you do."

"Gad! Crosby, for a man who never refuses—" began Kane.

"It only shows what a martyr I am to the usages of society," concluded the Colonel with a chuckle.

"How's the crop of buds this year?" queried Larry Kane.

"Ask 'Bibby' Worthington," suggested Percy Endicott. "He's got 'em all down, looks, condition, action, pedigree——"

"Bigger than usual," said the gentleman appealed to, "queens, too, some of 'em."

"And have you picked out the lucky one already?" laughed Spencer.

"Bibby" Worthington, as everybody knew, had been "coming out" for ten years, with each season's crop of debutantes, and each season had offered his hand and heart to the newest of them.

ALLEGRO

But the question touched his dignity in more than one tender spot, and he refused to reply.

"They're all queens," sighed the Colonel, raising his glass. "I love 'em all, God bless 'em, their rosy faces, their round limpid eyes——"

"And the smell of bread and jam from the nursery," put in Spencer, the materialist, dryly. "Some new-comers, aren't there, Billy?"

"Oh, yes, a few Westerners."

"Oh, well, we need the money, you know."

The crowd broke up into groups of two and three, each with its own interests. Gallatin rose and joined Kane and Endicott at the window, where the three sat for awhile watching the endless procession of vehicles and pedestrians moving up and down the Avenue.

"Good sport in Canada, I hear, Phil," said Percy in a pause of conversation.

Gallatin glanced quickly at his companion.

"Fishing—yes," he said quietly, unable to control the flush that had risen unbidden to his temples. "No shooting."

"That's funny," went on the blissful Endicott with a laugh. "I heard you got a deer, Phil."

"Oh, yes, one——"

"A two-legged one—with skirts."

Gallatin started—his face pale.

"Who told you that?" he asked, his jaw setting.

"Oh, don't get sore, Phil. Somebody's brought the story down from Montreal—about your being lost in the woods—and—and all that," he finished lamely. "Sorry I butted in."

"So am I," said Gallatin, stiffly.

Percy's face crimsoned, and he stammered out an apology. He knew he had made a mistake. Gossip that

THE SILENT BATTLE

he was, he did not make it a habit to intrude upon other men's personal affairs, especially men like Gallatin who were intolerant of meddlers; but the story was now common property and to that extent at least he was justified.

"Don't be unpleasant, Phil, there's a good chap. I only thought——"

"Oh, it doesn't matter in the least," said Gallatin, rising, suddenly aware of the fact that the whole incident would only draw his adventure into further notoriety. "Somebody's made a good story of it," he laughed. "I did meet a— a girl in the woods and she stayed at my camp until her guides found her, that's all. I don't even know who she was," he finished truthfully.

Percy Endicott wriggled away, glad to be let off so easily; and after a word with Kane, Gallatin went quietly out.

He reached the street and turning the corner walked northward blindly, in dull resentment against Percy Endicott, and the world that he typified. Their story of his adventure, it appeared, was common property, and was being handed with God knows what hyperbole from one chattering group to another. It didn't matter about himself, of course. He realized grimly that this was not the first time his name had played shuttlecock to the fashionable battledore. It was of her he was thinking—of Jane. Thank God, they hadn't found a name to couple with his. What they were telling was doubtless bad enough without that, and the mere fact that his secret was known had already taken away some of the idyllic quality with which he had invested it. He knew what fellows like Ogden Spencer and Larry Kane were saying. Had he not himself in times past assisted at the post mortems of dead reputations, and wielded his scalpel with as lively a skill as the rest of them?

ALLEGRO

Two months had passed since that day in the woods when he had lost her, but there wasn't a day of that time when he had not hoped that some miracle would bring them together again. In Canada he had made inquiries at the camps he had passed, and poor Joe Keegón, who had spent a day with her guides, had come in for his share of recrimination. The party had come from the eastward, and had made a permanent camp; there were many people and many guides, but no names had passed. Joe Keegón was not in the habit of asking needless questions.

One thing alone that had belonged to her remained to Gallatin—a small gold flask which bore, upon its surface in delicate script, the letters J.L. On the day that they had broken camp Joe Keegón had silently handed it to him, his face more masklike than ever. Gallatin had thrust it into his coat-pocket with an air of indifference he was far from feeling, and had brought it southward to New York, where it now stood upon the desk in the room of his boyhood, so that he could see it each day, the token of a great happiness—the symbol of an ineffable disgrace.

It seemed now that Gallatin had not needed that reminder, for since he had been back in the city he had been working hard. It surprised him what few avenues of escape were open to him, for when he went abroad and did the things he had always done, there at his elbow was the Bowl. But his resolution was still unshaken, and difficult as he found the task, he went the round of his clubs at the usual hours and joined perfunctorily in the conversation. Always companionable, his fellows now found him reticent, more reserved and less prone to make engagements. Bridge he had foresworn and the card room at the Cosmos saw him no more. He stopped in at the club on the way

THE SILENT BATTLE

home as he had done to-day, sometimes leaving his associates with an abruptness which caused comment.

But already he was finding the trial he had set for himself less difficult; and as the habit of resistance grew on him, he realized that little by little he was drifting away from the associations which had always meant so much to him. He had not given up the hope of finding Jane. From a chance phrase, which he had treasured, he knew that New York was familiar to her and that some day he would see her. He was as sure of that as though Jane herself had promised it to him. She owed him nothing, of course, for in the hour of his madness he had thrown away the small claims he had upon her gratitude, and the only memory she could have of him was that which had been expressed in the look of fear and loathing he had last seen in her eyes. To her, of course, time and distance had only magnified that horror and he knew that when he met her, there was little to expect from her generosity, little that he would even dare ask of it except that she would listen while he told her of the enemy in his house and of the battle that was still raging in his heart. He wanted her to know about that. It was his right to tell her, not so much to clear himself of blame, as to justify her for the liberality of her confidence before the tide of battle had turned against him—against them both.

Time and distance had played strange tricks with Jane's image and at times it seemed very difficult for Galatin to reconstruct the picture which he had destroyed. Sometimes she appeared a Dryad, as when he had first seen her, running frightened through the wood, sometimes the forlorn child with the injured ankle, sometimes the cliff-woman; but most often he pictured her as when he had seen her last, running in terror and dismay from the sight of him. And the other Jane, the Jane that he

ALLEGRO

knew best, was hidden behind the eyes of terror. The memory was so vague that he sometimes wondered whether he would even know her if he met her dressed in the mode of the city. Somehow he could not associate her with the thought of fashionable clothes. She had worn no hat nor had she needed one. She belonged to the deep woods, where dress means only warmth and art means only artificiality. He always thought of her hatless, in her tattered shirtwaist and skirt, and upon Fifth Avenue was as much at a loss as to the kind of figure he must look for as though he were in the land of the great Cham.

Yes, he would know her, her slender figure, her straight carriage, the poise of her head, her brown hair, her deep blue eyes. No fripperies could conceal them. These were Jane. He would know them anywhere.

VIII

CHICOT, THE JESTER

PHILIP GALLATIN had been mistaken. He did not know Jane when he saw her. For, ten minutes later, he met her face to face in one of the paths of the Park—looked her in the face and passed on unknowing. Like the hound in the fable, he was so intent upon the reflection in the pool that he let slip the substance. He was conscious that a girl had passed him going in the opposite direction, a girl dressed in a dark gray tailor-made suit, with a fur at her neck and a dark muff swinging in one hand—a slender girl beside whom two French poodles frisked and scampered, a handsome girl in fashionable attire, taking her dogs for an airing. He walked on and sat down on a bench which overlooked the lake. The sun had fallen below the Jersey hills and only the tops of the tall buildings to the eastward held its dying glow. The lawns were swathed in shadow and the branches of the trees, already half denuded of their foliage, emerged in solemn silhouette like a pattern of Irish lace against the purpling sky. A hush had suddenly fallen on the distant traffic and Gallatin was alone.

Out of the half-light an inky figure came bounding up to him and sniffed eagerly at his knees. It was a black poodle. Gallatin patted the dog encouragingly, upon which it whined, put its paws on his lap and looked up into his face.

“Too bad, old man,” he said. “Lost, aren’t you?” Then, as the memory came to him, “By George, your mis-

CHICOT, THE JESTER

tress will be hunting. I wonder if we can find her." He turned the nickel collar in his fingers and examined the name-plate. There in script was the name of the owner, and an address. Gallatin thrust the crook of his stick through the dog's collar and rose. He must find Miss Jane Loring or return the animal to its home. Jane Loring? Jane—?

He stopped, bent over the excited dog and looked at the name plate again. Jane Loring—"J. L." Why—it was Jane's dog! He had passed her a moment ago—here—in the park. More perturbed even than the wriggling poodle, he rose and hurried along the path down which he had come. There could be no mistake. Of course, it was Jane! There was no possible doubt about it! That blessed poodle!

"Hi! there! Let up, will you?" he cried, as the dog twisted and squirmed away from him. A whistle had sounded shrilly upon Gallatin's left and before he knew it the dog had escaped him and was dashing hotfoot through the leaves toward the spot where a dark figure with another dog on a leash was rapidly moving.

Gallatin followed briskly and came up a moment later, in the midst of the excitement of reunion and reconciliation.

"Down, Chicot, down, I say," the girl was commanding. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself to be giving so much trouble!" And as Gallatin approached, breathlessly, hat in hand, "I'm ever so much obliged. I ought to have had him in leash. He's only a puppy and—" She stopped, mouth open, eyes wide as she recognized him. He saw the look she gave him and bowed his head.

"Jane!" he said, humbly. "Jane!"

The dogs were leaping around them both and Chicot

THE SILENT BATTLE

was biting joyously at his gloved hand, but Miss Loring had drawn back.

"You!" she said.

"Yes," softly. "I—I'm so glad to see you."

He held his hand before him as though to parry an expected blow.

"Don't," he muttered. "Give me a chance. There's so much I've got to say,—so much—"

"There's nothing for you to say," she said decisively. "If you'll excuse me—I—I must be going at once."

She turned away quickly, but the dogs were putting her dignity in jeopardy for the puppy still nosed Gallatin's hand and showed a determination to linger for his caress.

"You've *got* to listen," he murmured. "I'm not going to lose you again—"

"Come, Chicot," said the girl in a voice which was meant to be peremptory, but which sounded curiously ineffective. Chicot would not go until Gallatin caught him by the collar and followed.

"You see," he laughed, "you've got to stand for me—or lose the puppy."

But Miss Loring had turned abruptly and was moving rapidly toward the distant Avenue. Gallatin put on his hat and walked at her side.

"I want you to know—how it all happened to me—up there in the woods," he muttered, through set lips. "It's only justice to me—and to you."

"Will you please leave me!" she said, in a stifled voice, her head stiffly set, her eyes looking straight down the path before her.

"No," he replied, more calmly. "I'm not going to leave you."

"Oh, that you would dare!"

CHICOT, THE JESTER

"Don't, Jane!" he pleaded. "Can't you see that I've got to go with you whether——"

"My name is Loring," she interrupted coldly, strongly accenting the word.

"Won't you listen to me?"

"I'm entirely at your mercy—unfortunately. I've always thought that a girl was safe from intrusion here in the Park."

"Don't call it that. I'll go in a moment, if you'll only hear what I've got to say."

"You'd offer an apology for—for *that!*" She could not find a tone that suited her scorn of him.

"No—not apology," he said steadily. "One doesn't apologize for the things beyond one's power to prevent. It's the *miserere*, Jane—the *de profundis*——"

"It comes too late," she said, but she stole a glance at him in spite of herself. His head bent slightly forward, he was gazing, under lowered brows directly before him into the falling dusk. She remembered that look. He had worn it when he had sat by their camp-fire the night they had heard the voices.

"Yes, I know," he went on slowly. "Too late for you to understand—too late to help, and yet——"

"I beg that you will not go on," she broke in quickly, "It can do no good."

"I must go on. I've got so much to say and such a little time to say it in. Perhaps, I won't see you again. At least I won't see you unless you wish it."

"Then you'll not see me again."

He turned his head and examined her soberly.

"That, of course, is your privilege. Don't be too hard, if you can help it. Try and remember me, if you can, as I was before——"

"I shall not remember you at all, Mr. Gallatin."

THE SILENT BATTLE

He started as she spoke his name. "You knew?"

"Yes, I knew. You—your name was familiar to me."

"You mean that you had heard of me?" he asked wonderingly.

She knew that she had said too much, but she went on coldly.

"In New York one hears of Philip Gallatin. I knew—there in the woods. I discovered your name by accident—upon your letters."

She spoke shortly—hesitantly, as if every word was wrung from her by an effort of will.

"I see," he said, "and what you heard of me—was not good?"

"No," she said. "It was not good. But I had known you two days then, and I—I thought there must—have been some mistake—until—" she broke off passionately. "Oh, what is the use of all this?" she gasped. "It's lowering to your pride and to mine. If I have said more than I meant to say, it is because I want you to know why I never want to see you—to hear of you again."

He bowed his head beneath the storm. He deserved it, he knew, and there was even a bitter pleasure in his retribution, for her indifference had been hardest to bear.

"I understand," he said quietly. "I will go in a moment. But first I mean that you shall hear what I have to say."

She remembered that tone of command. He had used it when he had lifted her in his arms and carried her helpless to his camp-fire. The memory of it shamed her, as his presence did now, and she walked on more rapidly. Their path had been deserted, but they were now approaching the Avenue where the hurrying pedestrians and

CHICOT, THE JESTER

vehicles proclaimed the end of privacy. A deserted bench was before them.

“Please stop here a moment,” he pleaded. “I won’t keep you long.” And when she would have gone on he laid a hand on her arm. “You must!” he insisted passionately. “You’ve got to, Jane. You’ll do me a great wrong if you don’t. I’ve kept the faith with you since then—since I was mad there in the wilderness. You didn’t know or care, but I’ve kept the faith—the good you’ve done—don’t undo it now.”

A passer-by was regarding them curiously and so she sat, for Gallatin’s look compelled her. She did not understand what he meant, and in her heart she knew she could not care whose faith he kept, or why, but she recognized in his voice the note of a deep emotion, and was conscious of its echo in her own spirit. Outwardly she was as disdainful as before, and her silence, while it gave him consent, was anything but encouraging. As he sat down beside her the puppy, “Chicot,” put his head upon Gallatin’s knees and looked up into his eyes, so Gallatin put his hand on the dog’s head and kept it there.

“I want you to know something about my people—about—the Gallatins——”

“I know enough, I think.”

“No—you’re mistaken. We are not all that you think we are. Let me go on,” calmly. “The Gallatins have always stood for truth of speech and honesty of purpose, and whatever their failings they have all been called honorable men. Upon the Bench, at the Bar, in the Executive chair, no word has ever been breathed against their professional integrity or their civic pride. My great grandfather was a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, my grandfather a Governor of the State of New York, my father——”

THE SILENT BATTLE

Miss Loring made a gesture of protest.

"Wait," he insisted. "My father was a great lawyer—one of the greatest this City and State have ever known—and yet all of these men, mental giants of their day and generation—had—had a weakness—the same weakness—the weakness that I have. To one of them it meant the loss of the only woman he had ever loved—his wife and his children; to another the sacrifice of his highest political ambition; to my father a lingering illness of which he subsequently died. That is my pedigree—of great honor—and greater shame. History has dealt kindly because their faults were those of their blood and race, for which they themselves were not accountable. This may seem strange to you because you have only learned to judge men by their performances. The phenomenon of heredity is new to you. People are taught to see the physical resemblances of the members of a family to its ancestors—but of the spiritual resemblance one knows nothing—unless—" his voice sunk until it was scarcely audible, "unless the spiritual resemblance is so strong that even Time itself cannot efface it."

The girl did not speak. Her head was bowed but her chin was still set firmly, and her eyes, though they looked afar, were stern and unyielding.

"When I went to the woods, I was—was recovering—from an illness. I went up there at the doctor's orders. I had to go, and I—I got better after a while. Then you came, and I learned that there was something else in life besides what I had found in it. I had never known—"

"I can't see why I should listen to this, Mr. Gallatin."

"Because what happened after that, you were a part of."

"I?"

"It was you who showed me how to be well. That's

CHICOT, THE JESTER

all," he finished quietly. He rubbed the dog's ears between his fingers and got some comfort from Chicot's sympathy, but went on in a constrained voice. "I was hoping you might understand, that you might give me charity—if only the charity you once gave to the carcass of a dead deer."

There was a long silence during which he watched her downcast profile, but when at last she lifted her head, he knew that she was still unyielding.

"You ask too much, Mr. Gallatin," she said constrainedly. "If you were dead you might have my pity—even my tears, but living—living I can only—only hold you in—abhorrence."

She rose from the bench quickly and shortened in the leashes of her dogs.

"You—you dislike me so much as that?" he asked dully.

"Dislike and—and fear you, Mr. Gallatin. If you'll excuse me——"

She turned away and Gallatin started up. Dusk had fallen and they were quite alone.

"I can't let you go like this," he whispered, standing in front of her so that she could not pass him. "I can't. You mean that you fear me because of what—happened—My God! Haven't I proved to you that it was madness, the madness of the Gallatin blood, which strikes at the happiness of those it loves the best? I love you, Jane. It's true. Night and day——"

"You've told me that before," she broke in fearlessly. "Must you insult me again. For shame! Let me pass, please."

It was the assurance of utter contempt. Gallatin bowed his head and drew aside. There was nothing left to do.

THE SILENT BATTLE

He stood there in the dusk, his head uncovered, and watched her slender figure as it merged into the darkness. Only the dog, Chicot, stopped, struggling, at his leash, but its mistress moved on hurriedly without even turning her head and was lost in the crowd upon the street. Galatin lingered a moment longer immovable and then turned slowly and walked into the depths of the Park, his face pale, his dark eyes staring like those of a blind man.

Night had fallen swiftly, but not more swiftly than the shadows on his spirit, among which he groped vaguely for the elements that had supported him. He crept into the night like a stricken thing, his feet instinctively guiding him away from the moving tide of his fellow-beings—one of whom had just denied him charity—without which his own reviving faith in himself was again in jeopardy. For two months he had fought his battle silently with her image in his mind—the image of a girl who had once given him faith and friendship, whose fingers had soothed him in fever, and whose eyes had been dark with compassion—the girl who had taught him the uses of responsibility and the glorification of the labor of his hands. That silent battle had magnified the image, vested it with sovereign rights, given it the gentle strength by which he had conjured, and he had fought joyfully, with a new belief in his own destiny, a real delight in conquest. His heart glowed with a dull wrath. Was it nothing that he had come to her clean-handed again? The image that he had conjured was fading in the sullen glow in the West out of which she had come to him. Was this Jane? The Jane he knew had sorrowed with the falling of a bird, mourned the killing of a squirrel and wept over the glazed eyes of a dead deer. Was this Jane? This disdainful woman with the modish hat and cold blue eye, this scorn-

CHICOT, THE JESTER

ful daughter of convention who sneered at sin and mocked at the tokens of repentance?

The image was gone from his shrine, and in its place a Nemesis sat enthroned—a Nemesis in dark gray who looked at him with the eyes of contempt and who called herself Miss Loring. He was resentful of her name as at an intrusion. It typified the pedantry of the conventional and commonplace.

The arc lamps died and flared, their shadows leaping like gnomes in and out of the obscurity. High in the air, lights punctured the darkness where the hotels loomed. Beside him on the drive gay turnouts hurried. The roar of the city came nearer. Arcadia was not even a memory.

The Pride of the Gallatins was a sorry thing that night. This Gallatin had bared it frankly, torn away its rugged coverings, that a woman might see and know him for what he was—the best and the worst of him. Even now he did not regret it; for bitter as the retribution had been, he knew that he had owed her that candor, for it was a part of the lesson he had learned with Jane—the other Jane—among the woods. This Jane remembered not; for she had struck and had not spared him, and each stinging phrase still pierced and quivered in the wound that it had made.

Out of the blackness of his thoughts reason came slowly. It was her right, of course, to deny him the privileges of her regard—the rights of fellowship—this he had deserved and had expected, but the carelessness of her contempt had been hard to bear. Mockery he had known in women, and intolerance, but no one of his blood had ever brooked contempt. His cheeks burned with the sudden flush of anger and his hand upon his stick grew rigid. A man might pay for such a thing as that—but a girl!

THE SILENT BATTLE

His muscles relaxed and he laughed outright. A snip of a girl that he'd kissed in the woods, who now came out dressed in broadcloth and sanctimony! How should it matter what she thought of him? Absurd little Puritan! Girls had been kissed before and had lived to be merry over it. He was a fool to have built this enchanted fabric into his brain, this castle of Micomicon which swayed and toppled about his ears. Miss Loring, forsooth!

He took out his cigarette case in leisurely fashion and struck a match, and its reflection sparkled gayly in his eyes. He inhaled deeply and bent his steps toward the nearest lights beyond the trees.

IX

THE LORINGS

THE house of Henry K. Loring, Captain of Industry and patron saint of one or more great businesses, was situated on that part of Central Park East which Colonel Van Duyn called Mammon's Mile. The land upon which it was built was more valuable even than the sands of Pactolus; and the architect, keenly conscious of his obligations to the earth which supported this last monument to his genius, had let no opportunity slip by which would make the building more expensive for its owner. Column, frieze, capital and entablature, all bore the tokens of his playful imagination, and the hipped roof which climbed high above its neighbors, ended in a riot of finial and coping, as though the architect nearing the end of his phantasy (and his commission) had crowded into the few short moments which remained to him all the ornament that had been forbidden him elsewhere. The edifice had reached the distinction of notice by the conductors of the "rubber-neck" busses on the Avenue and of the reproach of Percy Endicott, whose scurrilous comment that "it contained all of the fifty-seven varieties" had now become a by-word down town.

But the lofty hall and drawing-room of the house failed to fulfill the dire prediction of its ornate exterior, for here the architect, as though with a sudden awakening of the artistic conscience, had developed a simple scheme in an accepted design which somewhat atoned for his previous prodigality. A portrait of the master of the

THE SILENT BATTLE

house, by an eminent Englishman, hung in the hall, and in the drawing-room were other paintings of wife and daughter, by Americans and Frenchmen, almost, if not equally, eminent. The continent of Europe had been explored in search of tapestries and ornaments for the house of this new prince of finance, and evidences of rare discrimination were apparent at every hand. And yet with all its splendor, the house lacked an identity and an ego. It was too sophisticated. Each object of art, beautiful in itself, spoke of a different taste—a taste which had been bought and paid for. It was like a museum which one enters with interest but without emotion. It was a house without a soul.

It was toward this splendid mausoleum that the daughter of the house made her way after her meeting with Mr. Gallatin in the Park. After one quick look over her shoulder in the direction from which she had come, she walked up the driveway hurriedly and rang the bell, entering the glass vestibule, from which, while she waited for the door to be opened, she peered furtively forth. A man in livery took the leashes of the poodles from her hand and closed the door behind her.

“Has Mother come in, Hastings?”

“Yes, Miss Loring. She has been asking for you.”

Miss Loring climbed the marble stairway that led to the second floor, but before she reached the landing, a voice sounded in her ears, a thin voice pitched in a high key of nervous tension.

“Jane! Where *have* you been? Don’t you know that we’re going to the theatre with the Dorsey-Martin’s to-night? Madame Thiebout has been waiting for you for at least an hour. What has kept you so long?”

“I was walking, Mother,” said the girl. “I have a headache. I—I’m not going to-night.”

THE LORINGS

Mrs. Loring's hands flew up in horrified protest. "There!" she cried. "I knew it. If it hadn't been a headache, it would have been something else. It's absurd, child. Why, we *must* go. You *know* how important it is for us to keep in with the Dorsey-Martins. It's the first time they've asked us to anything, and it means so much in every way."

Miss Loring by this time had walked toward the door of her own room, for her mother's voice when raised, was easily heard in every part of the big house.

"I'm not going out to-night, Mother," she repeated quietly, shutting the door behind them.

"Jane," Mrs. Loring cried petulantly. "Mrs. Dorsey-Martin is counting on you. She's asked some people especially to meet you—the Perrines, the Endicotts, and Mr. Van Duyn, and you know how much *he* will be disappointed. Lie down on the couch for a moment, and take something for your nerves. You'll feel better soon, that's a dear girl."

The unhappy lady put her arm around her daughter's waist and led her toward the divan.

"I knew you would, Jane dear. There. You've got so much good sense——"

Miss Loring sank listlessly on the couch, her gaze fixed on the flowered hangings at her windows. Her body had yielded to her mother's insistence, but her thoughts were elsewhere. But as Mrs. Loring moved toward the bell to call the maid, her daughter stopped her with a gesture.

"It isn't any use, Mother. I'm not going," she said wearily.

The older woman stopped and looked at her daughter aghast.

"You really mean it, Jane! You ungrateful girl!"

THE SILENT BATTLE

I've always said that you were eccentric, but you're obstinate, too, and self-willed. A headache!" scornfully. "Why, last year I went to the opera in Mrs. Poultney's box when I thought I should *die* at any moment! I don't believe you have a headache. You're lying to me—hiding inside yourself the way you always do when I want your help and sympathy most. I don't understand you at all. You're no daughter of mine. When I'm trying so hard to give you your proper place in the world, to have you meet the people who will do us the most good! It's a shame, I tell you, to treat me so. Why did I bring you up with so much care? See that your associates out home should be what I thought proper for a girl with the future that your father was making for you? Why did I take you abroad and give you all the advantages of European training and culture? Have you taught music and French and art? For *this*? To find that your only pleasure is in books and walks in the Park—and in the occasional visits of the friends of your youth whom you should long since have outgrown? It's an outrage to treat me so—an outrage!"

Unable longer to control the violence of her emotions, the poor woman sank into a chair and burst into tears. Miss Loring rose slowly and put her arms around her mother's shoulders.

"Don't, Mother!" she said softly. "You mustn't cry about me. I'm not really as bad as you think I am. I'm not worth bothering about, though. But what does it matter—this time?"

"It—it's always—this time," she wept.

"No—I'll go anywhere you like, but not to-night. I *do* feel badly. I *really* do. I—I'm not quite up to seeing a lot of people. Don't cry, dear. You know it will make your eyes red."

THE LORINGS

Mrs. Loring set up quickly and touched her eyes with her handkerchief.

"Yes, yes; I know it does. I don't see how you can hurt me so. I suppose my complexion is ruined and I'll look like an old hag. It's a pity! Just after Thiebout had taken such pains with me, too."

"Oh, no, Mother, you're all right. You always did look younger than I do—and besides you light up so, at night."

Mrs. Loring rose and examined her face in a mirror. "Oh, well! I suppose I'll have to go without you. But I won't forget it, Jane. It does really seem as though the older I get the less my wishes are considered. But I'll do my duty as I see it, in spite of you. Do you suppose I had your father build this house just for me to sit in and look out of the windows at the passersby? Not I. Until we came to New York I spent all of my life looking at the gay world out of windows. I'm tired of playing second-fiddle."

Jane Loring stood before her mother and touched her timidly on the arm. The physical resemblance between them was strong, and it was easily seen where the daughter got her beauty. Mrs. Loring had reached middle life very prettily, and at a single impression it was difficult to tell whether she was nearer thirty-three or fifty-three. Her skin was of that satiny quality which wrinkles depress but do not sear. Her nose was slightly aquiline like her daughter's, but the years had thinned her lips and sharpened her chin, the lines at her mouth were querulous rather than severe, and when her face was placid, her forehead was as smooth as that of her daughter. She was not a woman who had ever suffered deeply, or who ever would, and the petty annoyances which add small wrinkles to the faces of women of her years had left no marks whatever.

THE SILENT BATTLE

But since the family had been in New York Jane had noticed new lines between her brows as though her eyes, like those of a person traveling upon an unfamiliar road, were trying for a more concentrated and narrow vision; and as she turned from the mirror toward the light, it seemed to Jane that she had grown suddenly old.

“Mother, dear, you mustn’t let trifles disturb you so. It will age you frightfully! You know how people are always saying that you look younger than I do. I don’t want to worry you. I’ll do whatever you like, go wherever you like, but not to-night——”

“What is the matter, Jane? Has anything happened?”

“Oh, no, I—I don’t feel very well. It’s nothing at all. I’ll be all right to-morrow. But you must go without me. There’s to be supper afterward, isn’t there?”

“Oh, yes.” And then despairingly: “You always have your own way, in the end.”

She kissed the girl coldly on the brow and turned toward the door.

“You must hurry now,” said Jane. “Mr. Van Duyn will be coming soon, and dinner is early. Good night, dear. I won’t be down to-night. I think I’ll lie down for awhile.”

Mrs. Loring turned one more helpless look in Jane’s direction and then went out of the room.

When the door had closed, Jane Loring turned the key in the lock, then sank at full length on the couch, and seemed to be asleep; but her head, though supported by her arms, was rigid and her eyes, wide open, were staring at vacancy. In the hall outside she heard the fall of footsteps, the whisper of servants and the commotion of her mother’s descent to dinner. A hurdy-gurdy around the corner droned a popular air, a distant trolley-bell

THE LORINGS

clanged and an automobile, exhaust open, dashed by the house. These sounds were all familiar here, and yet she heard them all; for they helped to silence the echoes of a voice that still persisted in her ears, a low sonorous voice, whose tones rose and fell like the sighing of Kee-way-din in the pine-trees of the frozen North. Her thoughts flew to that distant spot among the trees, and she saw the shimmer of the leaves in the morning sunlight, heard the call of the birds and the whispering of the stream. It was cold up there now, so bleak and cold. By this time a white brush had painted out the glowing canvas of summer and left no sign of what was beneath. And yet somewhere hidden there, as in her heart, beneath that chill mantle was the dust of a fire—the gray cinders, the ashes of a dead faith, and Kee-way-din moaned above them.

A tiny clock upon the mantle chimed the hour. Miss Loring moved stiffly, and sat suddenly upright. She got up at last and putting on a loose robe, went to her dressing table, her chin high, her eye gleaming coldly at the pale reflection there. The blood of the Gallatins! Did he think the magic of his name could make her forget the brute in him, the beast in him, that kissed and spoke of love while the thin blood of the Gallatins seethed in its poison? What had the blood of the Gallatins to do with her? Honor, virtue, truth? He had spoken of these. What right had he to use them to one who had an indelible record of his infamy? His kisses were hot on her mouth even now—kisses that desecrated, that profaned the words he uttered. Those kisses! The memory of them stifled her. She brushed her bare arm furiously across her lips as she had done a hundred times before. Lying kisses, traitorous kisses, scourging kisses, between which he had dared to speak of love! If he had not done that, she might even have forgiven him the physical con-

THE SILENT BATTLE

tact that had defamed her womanhood. And yet to-night he had spoken those same words again, repeated them with a show of warmth, that his depravity might have some palliation and excuse. He could, it seemed, be as insolent as he was brutal.

Determined to think of him no more, she rang for her maid and ordered dinner. Then, book in hand, she went down stairs. Mr. Van Duyn, she was relieved to think, had departed with Mrs. Loring, and she smiled almost gaily at the thought that this evening at least was her own. As she passed into the library, she saw that a bright light was burning in her father's study, and she peeped in at the door.

It was not a large room, the smallest one, in fact, upon the lower floor, but unlike most of the other rooms, it had a distinct personality. The furniture—chairs, desks, and bookcases—was massive, almost too heavy to make for architectural accordance, and this defect was made more conspicuous by the delicacy and minuteness of the ornaments. There were two glass cases on a heavy table filled with the most exquisite ivories, most of them Japanese, an Ormolu case with a glass top enclosing snuff-boxes and miniatures. Three Tanagra figures graced one bookcase and upon another were several microscopes of different sizes. The pictures on the walls, each of them furnished with a light-reflector, were small with elaborately carved gold frames—a few of them landscapes, but most of them “genre” paintings, with many small figures.

Before one discovered the owner of this room one would have decided at once that he must be smallish, slender, with stooping shoulders, gold-rimmed eye-glasses, a jeweled watch-fob and, perhaps, a squint; and the massive appearance of the present occupant would have occasioned more than a slight shock of surprise. When

THE LORINGS

Jane looked in, Henry K. Loring sat on the very edge of a wide arm chair, with a magnifying glass in his hand carefully examining a small oil painting which was propped up under a reading light on another chair in front of him. People who knew him only in his business capacity might have been surprised at his quiet and critical delight in this studious occupation, for down town he was best known by a brisk and summary manner, a belligerent presence and a strident voice which smacked of the open air. His bull-like neck was set deep in his wide shoulders as his keen eyes peered under their bushy eyebrows at the object in front of him. He was so absorbed that he did not hear the light patter of his daughter's footsteps, and did not move until he heard the sound of her voice.

"Well, Daddy!" she said in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

His round head turned slowly as though on a pivot.

"Hello, Jane! Feeling better?" He raised his chin and winked one eye expressively.

"I thought you were going—with Mother," said Miss Loring.

"Lord, no! You know I—" and he laughed. "I had a headache, too."

The girl smiled guiltily, but she came over and sat upon the arm of the chair, and laid her hand along her father's shoulder.

"Another picture! Oh, Daddy, such extravagance! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? So *that's* why you stole away from the Dorsey-Martin's——"

"It's another Verbeckhoeven, Jane," he chuckled delightedly. "A perfect wonder! The best he ever did, I'm sure! Come, sit down here and look at it."

Jane sank to the floor in front of the painting and

THE SILENT BATTLE

reached for the enlarging glass. But he held it away from her.

"No, no," he insisted. "Wait, first tell me how many things you can see with the naked eye."

"A horse, a cow, a man lying on the grass, trees, distant haystacks and a windmill," she said slowly.

"And is that all?" he laughed.

"No, a saddle on the ground, a rooster on the fence—yes—and some sheep at the foot of the hill."

"Nothing more?"

"No, I don't think so—except the buckles on the harness and the birds flying near the pigeon-cote."

"Yes—yes—is that all?"

"Yes, I'm sure it is."

"You're blind as a bat, girl," he roared delightedly. "Look through this and see!" and he handed her the glass. "Buckles on the horses! Examine it! Don't you see the pack thread it's sewed with? And the saddle gall on the horse's back? And the crack in the left fore-hoof? Did you ever see anything more wonderful? Now look into the distance and tell me what else."

"Haymakers," gasped Miss Loring. "Two women, a man and—and, yes, a child. I couldn't see them at all. There's a rake and pitch fork, too——"

"And beyond——?"

"Dykes and the sails of ships—a town and a tower with a cupola!"

"Splendid! And that's only half. I've been looking at it for an hour and haven't found everything yet. I'll show them to you—see——"

And one by one he proudly revealed his latest discoveries. His passion for the minute almost amounted to an obsession, and the appearance of his large bulk poring over some delicate object of art was no unfamiliar one to

THE LORINGS

Jane, but she always humored him, because she knew that, although he was proud of his great house, here was the real interest that he found in it. His business enthralled him, but it made him merciless, too, and in this harmless hobby his daughter had discovered a humanizing influence which she welcomed and encouraged. It gave them points of contact from which Mrs. Loring was far removed, and Jane was always the first person in the household to share the delights of his latest acquisitions. But to-night she was sure that her duty demanded a mild reproof.

"It's an astonishing picture, Daddy, but I'm sure we've both treated Mother very badly. You know you promised her——"

"So did you——"

"But I—I felt very badly."

"So did I," he chuckled, "very badly." He put his arm around his daughter's shoulders and drew her closer against his knees. "Oh, Jane, what's the use? Life's too short to do a lot of things you don't want to do. Your mother likes to go around. Let her buzz, she likes it."

"Perhaps she does," Jane reproved him. "But then you and I have our duty."

"Don't let that worry you, child. I do my duty—but I do it in a different way. Your mother stalks her game in its native wild. I don't. I wait by the water hole until it comes to drink, and then I kill it."

"But people here must have some assurance that new families are acceptable——"

"Don't worry about that, either. We'll do, I guess. And when I want to go anywhere, or want my family to go anywhere, I ask, that's all. The women don't run New York society. They only think they do. If there's

THE SILENT BATTLE

any house you want to go to or any people you want to come to see us, you tell *me* about it. There's more than one way to skin a cat, but my way is the quickest. I'm not going to have you hanging on the outer fringe. You can be the jewel and the ornament of the year. Even Mrs. Suydam will take you under her wing, if you want her to."

"But I don't want to be under any one's wing. I might turn out to be the ugly duckling."

He pressed her fondly in his great arms. "You are—a duckling—it's a pity you're so ugly." He laughed at his joke and broke off and seized the glass from her fingers.

"Jane," he cried, "you didn't find the woman inside the farmhouse! And the jug on the bench beside——"

But Miss Loring's thoughts were elsewhere.

"Daddy, I don't want people to come to see me, unless I like them," she went on slowly, "and I don't want to go to peoples' houses just because they're fashionable houses. I want to choose my friends for myself."

"You shall!" he muttered, laying down his glass with a sigh and putting his arm around her again. And then with a lowered voice, "You haven't seen anybody you—you really like yet, daughter, have you?"

"No," said Miss Loring, with a positiveness which startled him. "No one—not a soul."

"Not Coleman Van Duyn——"

"Daddy!" she cried. "Of course not!"

"And no one else?"

"No one else."

He grunted comfortably. "I'm glad of that. I haven't seen anybody good enough for you yet. I'm glad it's not Van Duyn—or young Sackett. I thought, perhaps, you had," he finished.

"Why?"

THE LORINGS

"You've been so quiet lately."

"Have I?" she smiled into the fire. "I didn't know it."

"Don't you let people worry you, and don't take this society game too seriously. It's only a game, and a poor one at that. It's only meant for old fools who want to be young and young fools who want to be old. Those people don't play it just for the fun of the thing—to them it's a business, and they work at it harder than a lot of galley-slaves. You've got to try it, of course, I believe in trying everything, but don't you let it get you twisted—the ball-room, with its lights, its flowers and its pretty speeches. They're all part of the machinery. The fellow you're going to marry won't be there, Jane. He's too busy."

"Who do you mean?"

"Oh, nobody in particular," he snorted. "But I don't believe you'll ever marry a carpet-knight. You won't if I can stop you, at any rate." He had taken out a cigar and snipped the end of it carefully with a pocket-knife. "They're a new kind of animal to me, these young fellows about town," he said between puffs. "Beside a man, they're what the toy pug is to the bulldog or the Pomeranian is to the 'husky.' Fine dogs they are," he sniffed, "bred to the boudoir and the drawing-room!"

"But some of them are very nice, Daddy," said Jane. "You *know* you liked Dirwell De Lancey and William Worthington."

"Oh, they're the harmless kind, playful and amusing!" he sneered. "But they're only harmless because they haven't sense enough to be anything else. You'll meet the other kind, Jane, the loafers and the drunkards."

Miss Loring leaned quickly forward away from him, her elbows on her knees, and looked into the fire.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I suppose so," she said quietly.

"It's the work of the social system, Jane. Most of these old families are playing a losing game, their blood is diluted and impoverished, but they still cling to their ropes of sand. They marry their children to *our* children, but God knows that won't help 'em. It isn't money they need. Money can't make new gristle and cartilage. Money can't buy new fiber."

The girl changed her position slightly. "I suppose it's all true, but it seems a pity that the sons should suffer for the sins of the fathers."

"It's written so—unto the third and fourth generation, Jane."

"But the sons—they have no chance—no chance at all?"

"Only what they can save out of the wreck. Take young Perrine or young Gallatin, for instance. *There's* a case in point. His people have all been rich and talented. They've helped to make history, but they've all had the same taint. Year by year they've seen their fortunes diminish, but couldn't stem the tide against them. But now the last of the line is content just to exist on the fag-end of what's left him. He's clever, too, they say—went into the law, as his father did, but——"

"Oh, Daddy, it's unjust—cruel!" Jane Loring broke in suddenly.

"What is?"

"Hereditv——"

"It's the law! I feel sorry for that young fellow. I like him, but I'd rather see you dead at my feet than married to him."

Miss Loring did not move, but the hands around her knee clasped each other more tightly.

"I don't know—I've never been introduced to Mr. *Gallatin*," she said quietly.

MR. VAN DUYN RIDES FORTH

MR. COLEMAN VAN DUYN lurched heavily up the wide steps that led to the main corridor of the Potowomac apartments and took the elevator upstairs. He asked for mail and sat down at the desk in his library with a frowning brow and protruding jowl. Affairs down town had not turned out to his liking this morning. For a month everything seemed to have gone wrong. He was short on stocks that had struck the trade-winds, and long on others that were hung in the doldrums; his luck at Auction had deserted him; his latest doctor had made a change in his regimen; a favorite horse had broken a leg; and last, but not by any means the least, until this afternoon Fate had continued to conspire to keep him apart from Miss Jane Loring.

They had met casually several times at people's houses and once he had talked with her at the Suydam's, but the opportunities for which he planned obstinately refused to present themselves. He had finally succeeded in persuading her to ride with him to-day, and after writing a note or two, he called his man and dressed with particular care. Mr. Van Duyn's mind was so constructed that he could never think of more than one thing at a time; but of that one thing he always thought with every dull fiber of his brain, and Miss Loring's indifference to his honorable intentions had preyed upon him to the detriment of other and, perhaps, equally important interests.

Mr. Van Duyn was large of body and ponderous of

THE SILENT BATTLE

thought, and his decisions were only born after a prolonged and somewhat uncertain period of gestation. It took him an hour to order his dinner, and at least two hours to eat (and drink) it. And so when at the age of five and thirty he had reached the conclusion that it was time for him to marry, he had set about carrying his resolution into effect with the same solemn deliberation which characterized every other act of his life. He had been accustomed always to have things happen exactly as he planned them, and was of the opinion, when he followed the Loring's to Canada, that nothing lacked in the proposed alliance to make it eminently desirable for both of the parties concerned. Matches he knew were no longer made in Heaven and an opportunist like Henry K. Loring could not long debate upon the excellence of the arrangement.

Miss Loring's refusal of him up at camp, last summer, had shocked him, and for awhile he had not been able to believe the evidence of his ears, for Mrs. Loring had given him to understand that to her at least he was a particularly desirable suitor. When he recovered from his shock of amazement, his feeling was one of anger, and his first impulse to leave the Loring camp at once. But after a night of thought he changed his mind. He found in the morning that Miss Loring's refusal had had the curious effect of making her more desirable, more desirable, indeed, than any young female person he had ever met. He was in love with her, in fact, and all other reasons for wanting to marry her now paled beside the important fact that she was essential to his well being, his mental health and happiness. He did not even think of her great wealth as he had at first done, of the fortune she would bring which would aid materially in providing the sort of an establishment a married Van Duyn must maintain. In

MR. VAN DUYN RIDES FORTH

his cumbrous way he had decided that even had she been penniless, she would have been necessary to him just the same.

He had stayed on at camp, accepting Mrs. Loring's advice that it would not be wise to take her refusal seriously. She was only a child and could not know the meaning of the honor he intended to confer. But in New York her indifference continued to prick his self-esteem, and for several weeks he had been following her about, sending her flowers and losing no chance to keep his memory green.

And so, he examined his shiny boots with a narrowing and critical eye, donned a favorite pink silk shirt and tied on a white stock into which he stuck a fox-head pin. He had put on more flesh in the last three years than he needed, and his collar bands were getting too tight; but as he looked in the mirror of his dressing-stand, he was willing to admit that he was still the fine figure of a man—a Van Duyn every inch of him. It was in the midst of this agreeable occupation that Mr. Worthington entered, a corn-flower in his buttonhole and otherwise arrayed for conquest. Van Duyn looked over his shoulder and nodded a platonic greeting.

“Tea-ing it, Bibby?”

“Oh, yes. Might as well do that as sit somewhere. Just stopped in on my way down.” Worthington's apartment was above. And then, “Lord Coley, you *are* filling out! Riding?”

“No,” grinned the other, “going to pick strawberries on the Metropolitan Tower. Don't I look like it?”

Worthington smiled. Van Duyn's playfulness always much resembled that of a young St. Bernard puppy.

“I thought you'd given it up. Her name, please.”

Mr. Van Duyn refused to reply.

“It's the Loring girl, isn't it?” Worthington queried

THE SILENT BATTLE

cheerfully. "I thought so. You lucky devil!" He touched the tips of two fingers and thumb to his lips, and with eyes heavenward laid them upon his heart. "She's an angel, a blue-eyed angel, fresh from the rosy aura of a cherubim. Oh, Coley, what the devil can she see in you?"

"Don't be an ass, Bibby," Van Duyn grunted wrathfully.

"I'm not an ass. I'm in love, you amatory Behemoth, in love as I've never been before—with an angel fresh from Elysium."

"Meaning Miss Jane Loring?"

"Who else? There's no one else," dolefully. "There never has been any one else—there never will be any one else. You're in love with her, too; aren't you, Coley?"

"Well, of all the impudence!"

"Nonsense. I'm only living up to the traditions of our ancient friendship. I'm giving you a fair warning. I intend to marry the lady myself."

The visitor had lit a cigarette and was calmly helping himself to whisky. Van Duyn threw back his head and roared with laughter.

"You! Good joke. Haw! You've got as many lives as a cat, Bibby. Been blowing out your brains every season for fifteen years." He struggled into his coat and squared himself before the mirror. "Wasting your time," he finished dryly.

"Meaning that *you* are the chosen one? Oh, I say, Coley, don't make me laugh. You'll spoil the set of my cravat. You know, I couldn't care for her if I thought her taste was as bad as that. Not engaged are you?"

"Oh, drop it," said the other. "Remarks are personal. Miss Loring is fine girl. Fellow gets her will be lucky." He had poured himself a drink, but paused in the

MR. VAN DUYN RIDES FORTH

act of taking it, and asked, "Haven't seen Gallatin lately, have you?"

"No—nobody has—since that night at the Club. He'd been sitting tight—and God knows that's no joke! Good Lord, but he did fall off with a thud! Been on the wagon six months, too. He ought to let it alone."

"He can't," said Van Duyn grimly.

"Well, six months is a good while—for Phil—but he stuck it out like a little man." And then ruminatively, "I wonder what made him begin again. He'd been refusing all the afternoon. Came in later with his jaw set—white and somber—you know—and started right in. It's a great pity! I'd like to have a talk with Phil. I'm fond of that boy. But he's so touchy. Great Scott! I tried it once, and I'll never forget the look he gave me. Never again! I'd as leave try a curtain lecture on a Bengal tiger."

"What's the use? We've got troubles of our own."

"Not like his, Coley. With me it's a diversion, with you it's an appetite, with Phil it's a disease. That's why he went to Canada this summer. By the way, you were in the woods with the Lorings, of course you heard about that girl that Phil met up there?"

"No," growled the other.

"Seems to be a mystery. Percy Endicott says——"

Van Duyn set his glass on the table with a crash that broke it, then rose with an oath.

"Think I'm going to listen to *that* rubbish?" he muttered. "Who cares what happened to Gallatin? I don't, for one. As for Percy, he's a lyin', little gossipin' Pharisee. I don't believe there *was* any girl——"

"But Gallatin admits it."

"D—— Gallatin!" he roared.

Worthington looked up in surprise, but rose and

THE SILENT BATTLE

kicked his trousers legs into their immaculate creases.

"Oh, if you feel that way about it—" He took up his silk hat and brushed it with his coat sleeve. "I think I'll be toddling along."

"Oh, don't get peevish, Bibby. You like Phil Gallatin. Well, I don't. Always too d—— starchy for me anyway." He paused at the table in the library while he filled his cigarette case from a silver box. Then he examined Worthington's face. "You didn't hear the girl's name mentioned, did you?" he asked carelessly.

"Oh, no, even Gallatin didn't know it." Worthington had put on his hat and was making for the door. "Of course it doesn't matter anyway."

Van Duyn followed, his man helping them into their overcoats.

"Can't drop you anywhere, can I, Bibby? I've got the machine below."

"No, thanks. I'll walk."

On the ride uptown Coleman Van Duyn glowered moodily out at the winter sunlight. He had heard enough of this story they were telling about Phil Gallatin and the mysterious girl in the woods. He alone knew that the main facts were true, because he had had incontestible evidence that the mysterious girl was Jane Loring. All the circumstances as related exactly tallied with his own information received from the two guides who had brought her into Loring's camp. And in spite of his knowledge of Jane's character, the coarse embroidery that gossip was adding to the tale had left a distinctly disagreeable impression. Jane Loring had spent the better part of a week alone with Phil Gallatin in the heart of the Canadian wilderness. Van Duyn did not like Gallatin. They had known each other for years, and an appearance of fellowship existed between them, but in all tastes save one

MR. VAN DUYN RIDES FORTH

they had nothing in common. He and Gallatin had locked horns once before on a trifling matter, and the fact that the girl Van Duyn intended to marry had been thrown upon the mercies of a man of Gallatin's stamp was gall and wormwood to him. But when he thought of Jane he cursed the gossips in his heart for a lot of meddlers and scandal-mongers. If he knew anything of human nature—and like most heavy deliberate men, he believed his judgment to be infallible, Jane was the blue-eyed angel Mr. Worthington had so aptly described, "fresh from the rosy aura of a cherubim." But there were many things to be explained. One of the guides that had found her had dropped a hint that it was no guide's camp that she had visited in the woods, as she had told them at camp. And why, if she had been well cared for there, had she fled? What relations existed between Jane Loring and Phil Gallatin that made it necessary for her to hide the fact of his existence? What had Gallatin done that she should wish to escape him? Van Duyn's turgid blood seethed darkly in his veins. Gallatin had acknowledged the main facts of the story. Why hadn't he told it all, as any other man would have done without making all this mystery about it? Or why hadn't he denied it entirely instead of leaving a loophole for the gossip? Why hadn't he lied, as any other man would have done, like a gentleman? Only he, Van Duyn, had an inkling of the facts, and yet his lips were sealed. He had had to sit calmly and listen while the story was told in his presence at the club, while his fingers were aching to throttle the man who was repeating it. Phil Gallatin! D—— him!

It was, therefore, in no very pleasant frame of mind that Van Duyn got down at Miss Loring's door. The horses were already at the carriage drive and Miss

THE SILENT BATTLE

Loring came down at once. Mr. Van Duyn helped her into the saddle, and in a few moments they were in the Park walking their horses carefully until they reached the nearest bridle path, when they swung into a canter. Miss Loring had noted the preoccupation of her companion, and after one or two efforts at cheerful commonplace, had subsided, only too glad to enjoy in silence the glory of the afternoon sunlight. But presently when the horses were winded, she pulled her own animal into a walk and Van Duyn quickly imitated her example.

"Oh, I'm so glad I came, Coley," she said genuinely, with mounting color and sparkling eyes.

"Are you?" he panted, Jane's optimism at last defeating his megrims. "Bully, isn't it? Ever hunted?"

"Yes, one season at Pau."

"Jolly set, hunting set. Jolliest in New York."

"Yes, I know some of them—Mr. Kane, Mr. Spencer, Miss Jaffray, the Rawsons and the Penningtons. *They* wouldn't do *this*, though; they turn up their noses at Park riding. Aren't you hunting this year?"

"No," he grunted. "Life's too short." He might also have added that he wasn't up to the work, but he didn't. Jane noticed the drop in his voice and examined him curiously.

"You don't seem very happy to-day, Coley."

"Any reason you can think of why I should be?" he muttered.

"Thousands," she laughed, purposely oblivious. "The joy of living——"

"Oh, rot, Jane!"

"Coley! You're not polite!"

"Oh, you know what I mean well enough," he insisted sulkily.

"Do I? Please explain."

MR. VAN DUYN RIDES FORTH

"Don't you know, this is the first time I've been with you alone—since the woods?" he stammered.

Jane laughed.

"I'm sorry I have such a bad effect on you. *You* asked me to come, you know."

"Oh, don't tease a chap so. What's the use? Been tryin' to see you for weeks. You've been avoidin' me, Jane. What I want to know is—why?"

"I don't want to avoid you. If I did, I shouldn't be with you to-day, should I?"

There seemed to be no reply to that and Van Duyn's frown only deepened.

"I thought we were goin' to be friends," he went on slowly. "We had a quarrel up at camp, but I thought we'd straightened that out. You forgave me, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes. I couldn't very well do anything else. But you'll have to admit I'd never done anything to warrant——"

"I was a fool. Sorry for what I did, too. When you got back I told you so. I'm a fool still, but I've got sense enough to be patient. Pretty rough, though, the way you treat me. Thinkin' about you most of the time—all upset—don't sleep the way I ought—things don't taste right. I'm in love with you, Jane——"

"I thought you had promised not to speak of that again," she put in with lowered voice.

"Oh, hang it! I've got to speak of it," he growled. "When a fellow wants to marry a girl, he can't stay in the background and see other fellows payin' her attention—hear stories of——"

Jane looked up, her eyes questioning sharply and Coleman Van Duyn stopped short. He had not meant to go so far.

THE SILENT BATTLE

“Stories about *me*?”

He wouldn't reply, and only glowered at his horse's ears.

“What story have you heard about me, Coley?” she asked quietly.

“Oh, nothing,” he mumbled. “It wasn't about you,” he finished lamely.

“It's something that concerns me then. You've made that clear. You must tell me—at once,” she said decisively.

Van Duyn glanced at her and dropped his gaze, aware for the second time that this girl's spirit when it rose was too strong for him. And yet there was an anxiety in her curiosity, too, which gave him a sense of mastery.

“Oh, just gossip,” he said cautiously. “Everybody gets his share of it, you know.” Then he laughed aloud, rather too noisily, so that she wasn't deceived.

“It's something I have a right to know, of course. It must be unpleasant or you wouldn't have thought of it again. You must tell me, Coley.”

“What difference does it make?”

“None. But I mean to hear it just the same.”

“Oh!” He saw that her face was set in resolute lines, so he looked away, his lids narrowing, while he thought of a plan which might turn his information to his own advantage.

“It isn't about you at all,” he said slowly, sparring for time.

“Then why did you think of it?” She had him cornered now and he knew it, so he fought back sullenly, looking anywhere but at her.

“You haven't given me a fair show, Jane! Up in camp we got to be pretty good pals until—until you found out I wanted to marry you. Even then you said

MR. VAN DUYN RIDES FORTH

there wasn't any reason why we shouldn't be friends. I lost my head that morning and made a fool of myself and you ran away and got lost. When the guides brought you back you were different, utterly changed. Something had happened. You wouldn't have been so rotten to me, just because—because of that. Besides you forgave me. Didn't I acknowledge it? And haven't I done the square thing, let you alone, watched you from a distance, almost as if I didn't even know you? I tell you, Jane——”

“What has this to do with——”

“Wait,” he said, his eyes now searching hers, his color deepening as he gathered courage, while Jane Loring listened, conscious that her companion's intrusiveness and brutality were dragging her pride in the dust. “You went off into the woods and stayed five days. You told us when you got back to camp that you'd been found by an Indian guide and that you hadn't been able to find the trail—and all that sort of thing. Everybody believed you. We were all too glad to get you back. What I want to know is why you told that story? What was your reason for keeping back——”

“It was true——” she stammered, but his keen eyes saw that her face was blanching and her emotion infuriated him.

“All except that the Indian guide was Phil Gallatin,” he said brutally.

The hands that held the reins jerked involuntarily and her horse reared and swerved away, but in a moment she had steadied him; and when Van Duyn drew alongside of her, she was still very pale but quite composed.

“How do you know that?” she asked in a voice the tones of which she still struggled to control.

He waited a long moment, the frown gathering more

THE SILENT BATTLE

darkly. He had still hoped, it seemed, that she might deny it.

"Oh, I know it, all right," he muttered, glowering.

Her laughter rather surprised him. "Your keenness does you credit," she continued. "I met a stranger in the woods and stayed at his camp. There's nothing extraordinary in that——"

"No," he interrupted quickly. "Not in that. The extraordinary thing is that you should have——" he hesitated.

"Lied about it?" she suggested calmly. "Oh, I don't think we need discuss that. I'm not in the habit of talking over my personal affairs."

Her indifference inflamed him further and his eyes gleamed maliciously.

"It's a pity Gallatin hasn't a similar code."

Her eyes opened wide. "What—do—you—mean?" she asked haltingly.

"That Gallatin is telling of the adventure himself," he said with a bold laugh.

"He is telling—of—the—adventure——" she repeated, and then paused, her horrified eyes peering straight ahead of her. "Oh, how odious of him—how odious! There is nothing to tell—Coley—absolutely nothing——" And then as a new thought even more horrible than those that had gone before crossed her mind, "What are they saying? Has he—has he spoken my name? Tell me. I can't believe *that* of him—not that!"

Van Duyn was not sure that the emotion which he felt was pity for her or pity for himself, but he looked away, his face reddening uncomfortably, and when he spoke his voice was lowered.

"I heard the story," he said with crafty deliberateness, "at the Club. I got up and left the room."

MR. VAN DUYN RIDES FORTH

"Was—was Mr. Gallatin there?"

"No—not there?" he muttered. "He came in as I left. You know it wouldn't have been possible for me to stay."

"What are they saying, Coley?" she gasped, seeking in one breath to plumb the whole depth of her humiliation. "You must tell me. Do you mean that they're saying—that—that Mr. Gallatin and I—were—?" she couldn't finish, and he made no effort to help her, for her troubled face and every word that she uttered went further to confirm his suspicions and increase his misery.

"Do *you* believe that?" she whispered again. "Do you?" And then, as he refused to turn his head or reply, "Oh, how dreadful of you!"

She put spurs to her horse and before he was well aware of it was vanishing among the trees. His animal was unequal to the task he set for it, for he lost sight of her, found her again in the distance and thundered after, breathing heavily and perspiring at every pore, hating himself for his suspicions, and filled with terror at the thought of losing her. Never had he been so mad for the possession of her as now, and floundered helplessly on like an untrained dog in pursuit of a wounded bird. But he couldn't catch up with her. And when, later, he stopped at the Loring house, she refused to see him.

XI

THE CEDARCROFT SET

MISS LORING had no engagements for the evening, and excusing herself to her family, spent it alone in her room, where for a long while she sat or walked the floor, in dire distress, her faculties benumbed like those of a person who has suffered a calamitous grief or a physical violence. Sentence by sentence she slowly rehearsed the conversation of which she had been the subject, seeking vainly for some phrase that might lead her into the paths of comprehension and peace. The thought of Coleman Van Duyn loomed large, indeed, but another figure loomed larger. She was new to the world of men, of men of the world, such as she had met since she had been in New York, but it had never occurred to her to believe that there could be a person so base as Philip Gallatin. He weakened her faith in herself and in all the world. The dishonor he had offered her had been enough without this added insult to the memory of it. Downtown they were using her name scurrilously in the same breath with that of Phil Gallatin, speaking her name lightly as they spoke of—of other women they couldn't respect. Phil Gallatin's name and hers! It was the more bitter, because in her heart she now knew that she had given him more of her thoughts than any man had ever had before. Oh, what kind of a world was this into which she had come, which was made up of men who held their own honor and the honor of the women of their own kind so lightly? People received him, she knew. She

THE CEDARCROFT SET

had even heard of his being at the Suydams on an evening when she had been there. She had not seen him, and thanked God for that; for since their meeting in the Park, some weeks ago, her conscience had troubled her more than once, and her heart had had curious phases of uncertainty. "What if what he had said about his own dependence on her were true?" She had questioned herself, "What if," as in a few unrelated moments of moral irresponsibility she had madly speculated, "what if he really loved her as he said he did—and that his mad moment in the woods—their mad moment, as she had even fearfully acknowledged, was only the supreme expression of that reality?" He had solemnly sworn that he had kept the faith—that since that afternoon in the woods he had not broken it. She saw his dark eyes now and the animal-like look of irresolution which had been in them when she had turned away and left him.

Could this man they were talking of in the clubs who gibed at the virtue of women to make a good story, be the same smiling fugitive of the north woods, the man with the laugh of a boy, the tenderness of a woman and the strength of moral fiber to battle for her as he had done against the odds of the wilderness? It was unbelievable. And yet how could Coleman Van Duyn have repeated the story if he had not heard it? There was no reply for that. Weary at last, trying to reconcile the two irreconcilable facts, she fell into a fit of nervous tears at the end of which, relaxed and utterly exhausted, she sank to sleep.

Even then, though reason slept, her imagination had no rest, and she dreamed, one vision predominant—that of a tall figure who carried upon his back the carcass of a deer, his somber eyes peering over his shoulder at a shadow which followed him in the underbrush. But when

THE SILENT BATTLE

she spoke to the figure it smiled and the shadow behind disappeared. In her dream, she found this a curious phenomenon, and when the shadow returned, as it presently did, she spoke again. The shadow vanished and the smile appeared on the face of the man with the burden. Several times she repeated this experiment and each time the same thing happened. But in a moment the shadow formed into a definite shape, the bulky shape of Coleman Van Duyn it seemed, and growing larger as it came, closed in over them both. This time when she tried to speak, her lips would utter no sound. She awoke suffocating, and sat up in bed, gasping for breath. She looked about her and gave a long sigh of relief, for day had broken and the cool dawn was filtering through the warm flowered pattern on her window hangings, flooding the room with a rosy light.

That shadow! It had been so tangible, so real that she had fought at it with her bare hands when it had descended above Phil Gallatin's head! She lay awhile looking up at the painted ceiling, her eyes wide open, fearing that she might sleep again and the dream return; and then, without ringing for her maid, got out of bed abruptly, slipping her small feet into fur-lined room-slippers and putting on a flowered kimono. She was angry at herself for having dreams that could not be explained.

What right had Phil Gallatin's image to persist in her thoughts, even when she slept? And what did the vision mean? The shadow must be the shadow that had ever followed the Gallatins, and yet it looked like Coley Van Duyn! She laughed outright, and the sound of her voice echoed strangely in her ears. She had thought the shadow ominous, but she could laugh now because it looked like Coley!

She drew her bath and peered out of the window at

THE CEDARCROFT SET

the sunlight. Familiar sounds and sights reassured her, and with her plunge came rehabilitation, physical and mental. Poor Coley! How jealous he was, and how unghostlike! So jealous, perhaps, that he had lied to her! The thought of the possibility of this moral turpitude caused her to pause in the midst of her toilet and smile at her reflection in the mirror. It was a gay little smile which seemed out of place on the pale image which confronted her. She drew back her curtains and the morning sunlight streamed into the room bringing life and good cheer. No, she would not—could not believe what Coley had told of Philip Gallatin.

She dressed quickly, and before her astonished maid had her eyes open, had found the dog, Chicot, downstairs, and was out in the frosty air breasting the keen north wind in the Avenue. It was Kee-way-din that kissed her brow, Kee-way-din that brought the flush of health and youth into her cheeks, the breath of Kee-way-din which came with a winter message of hopefulness from the distant north woods. Chicot was joyful, too, and bounded like a harlequin along the walk and into the reaches of the Park. This was an unusual privilege for him, for his mistress carried not even a leash, and he was bent on making the most of his opportunities. He seemed to be aware that only business of unusual importance would take her out at this hour of the day, and came back barking and whining his sympathy and encouragement. Like most jesters, Chicot was foolish, but he had a heart under his Eton jacket, and he took pains that she should know it.

Chicot's philosophy cleared the atmosphere. Her course of action now seemed surprisingly clear to Jane. Philip Gallatin being no more and no less to her than any other man, deserved exactly the consideration to which her gratitude entitled him, deserved the punishment which

THE SILENT BATTLE

fitted the crime—precisely the punishment which she had given him. If they met, she would simply ignore him as she did other men to whom she was indifferent, and she thought that she could trust herself to manage the rest if, indeed, her rebuff had not already made her intentions clear to Gallatin. Refusing to meet him or cutting him in public would only draw attention and give him an importance with which she was far from willing to invest him. If, as she had said, he was not responsible for his actions, he was a very unfortunate young man, and deserved her pity as much as her condemnation; and it was obvious that he could not be more responsible for his actions in New York than elsewhere. She still refused to believe that her name had passed his lips, for of his honor in all things save one, reason as well as instinct now assured her.

The story of Coleman Van Duyn's no longer persisted. In spite of herself she made a mental picture of the two men, and Van Duyn suffered in the comparison. Coley had lied to her. That was all.

She walked briskly for twenty minutes and then sat down on a bench, the very one she remembered, upon which Mr. Gallatin three weeks ago had sat and told her of his misfortunes. Chicot came and sat in front of her, his muzzle on her knees, and looked up rapturously into her eyes.

"You're such a sinful little dorglums, Chicot," she said to him. "Don't you know that? To go running off and bringing back disagreeable and impudent vagabonds for me to send away? You're quite silly. And your moustache is precisely like Colonel Broadhurst's, except that it's painted black. Are you really as wise as you look? I don't believe you are, because you're dressed like a harlequin, and harlequins are never wise, or they

THE CEDARCROFT SET

shouldn't be harlequins. Wise people don't wear top-knots on their heads and rings upon their tails, Chicot. Oh, it's all very well for you to be so devoted now, but you'd run away at once if another vagabond came along—a tall vagabond with dark eyes and a deep voice that appealed to your own little vagabond heart. You're faithless, Chicot, and I don't care for you at all."

She rubbed his glossy ears between her fingers, and he put one dusty paw upon her lap. "No, I can't forgive you," she went on. "Never! All is over between us. You're a dissipated little vagabond, that's what you are, with no sense of responsibility whatever. I'm going to put you in a deep dark dungeon, on a diet of dust and dungaree, where you shall stay and meditate on your sins. Not another *maron*—not one. You're absolutely worthless, Chicot, that's what you are—worthless!"

The knot on the end of the dog's tail whisked approval; for, though he understood exactly what she said, it was the correct thing for dog-people to act only by tones of voice, but when his mistress got up he frisked homeward joyfully, with a gratified sense of his own important share in the conclusion of the business of the morning.

Jane Loring entered upon the daily round thoughtfully, but with a new sense of her responsibilities. For the first time in her life she had had a sense of the careless cruelty of the world for those thrown unprotected upon its good will. There was a note of plethoric contrition in her mail from Coleman Van Duyn. She read it very carefully twice as though committing it to memory, and then tearing it into small pieces committed it to the waste basket, a hard little glitter in her eyes which Mr. Van Duyn might not have cared to see. She made a resolve that from this hour she would live according to another

THE SILENT BATTLE

code. She was no longer the little school-girl from the convent in Paris. She was full-fledged now and would take life as she found it, her eyes widely opened, not with the wonder of adolescence, but keen for the excitements as well as the illusions that awaited her.

She got down from her limousine at the Pennington's house in Stuyvesant Square that night alone. Mr. Van Duyn, in his note, had pleaded to be allowed to stop for her in his machine and bring her home, but she had not called him on the 'phone as he had requested. It was a dinner for some of the members of the Cedarcroft set, as formal as any function to which this gay company was invited, could ever be. Jane was a moment late and hurried upstairs not a little excited, for though she had known Nellie Pennington in Pau, the guests were probably strangers to her. In the dressing-room, where she found Miss Jaffray and another girl she had not met, a maid helped her off with her cloak and carriage boots and, when she was ready to go down, handed her a silver tray bearing a number of small envelopes. She selected the one which bore her name, carelessly, wondering whether her fortunes for the evening were to be entrusted to Mr. Worthington or to Mr. Van Duyn, to find on the enclosed card the name of Philip Gallatin.

She paled a little, hesitated and lingered in the darkness by the door under the mental plea of rearranging her roses, her mind in a tumult. She had hardly expected to find him here, for Mr. Gallatin, she had heard, hunted no more and Nellie Pennington had never even mentioned his name. What should she do? To say that she did not wish to go in with a man high in the favor of her host and hostess as well as every one else, without giving a reason for her refusal would be gratuitously insulting to her hostess as well as to Mr. Gallatin. She glanced help-

THE CEDARCROFT SET

lessly at Nina Jaffray, who was leaning toward the pier glass, a stick of lip-salve in her fingers, and realized at once that there was to be no rescue from her predicament. Besides, changing cards with Miss Jaffray would not help matters, for over in the men's dressing room Mr. Gallatin by this time had read the card which told him that Miss Loring was to be his dinner partner.

She could not understand how such a thing had happened. Had Nellie Pennington heard? That was impossible. There were but three people in New York who knew about Mr. Gallatin and herself, and the third one was Coley Van Duyn, who had guessed at their relations. Could Philip Gallatin have dared—dared to ask this favor of their hostess after Jane's repudiation of him in the Park? She couldn't believe that either. Fate alone could have conspired to produce a situation so full of exquisite possibilities. She waited a moment, gathering her shattered resources; and with that skill at dissimulation which men sometimes ape, but never actually attain, she thrust her arm through Miss Jaffray's and the two of them went down the wide stairway, a very pretty picture of youth and unconcern.

Jane's eyes swept the room with obtrusive carelessness, and took in every one in it, including the person for whom the glance was intended, who saw it from a distant corner, and marveled at the smile with which she entered and greeted her hostess.

"Hello, Nina! Jane, dear, so glad you could come!" said Nellie Pennington. "Oh, what a perfectly darling dress! You went to Doucet after all—for your debutante *trousseau*. Perhaps, I'd better call it your *layette*—you absurd child! Oh, for the roses of yesterday! You know Betty Tremaine, don't you? And Mr. Savage? Coley do stop glaring and tell Phil Gallatin to come here at

THE SILENT BATTLE

once. My dear, you're going in with the nicest man—a very great friend of mine, and I want you to be particularly sweet to him. Hear? Mr. Gallatin—you haven't met—I know. Here he is now. Miss Loring—Mr. Gallatin."

Jane nodded and coolly extended her hand. "How do you do," she said, tepidly polite, and then quickly to her hostess. "It was very nice of you to think of me, Nellie, it seems ages since Pau, doesn't it?"

"Ages! You unpleasant person. When you get as old as I am, you'll never mention the flight of time. Ugh!"

Her shudder was very effective. Nellie Pennington was thirty-five, looked twenty, and knew it.

"What difference does it make," laughed Jane, "when Time forgets one?"

"Very prettily said, my dear. Time may amble, but he's too nimble to let you get him by the forelock." And turning she greeted the late comers.

Jane turned to Mr. Gallatin, who was saying something at her ear.

"I beg your pardon," she said.

"I hope you don't think that I—I am responsible for this situation," he repeated.

"What situation, Mr. Gallatin?"

"I hope you don't think that I knew I was to go in to dinner with you."

She laughed. "I hadn't really thought very much about it."

"I didn't—I didn't even know you were to be here. It's an accident—a cruel one. I wouldn't have had it happen for anything in the world."

"Do you think that's very polite?" she asked lightly.

THE CEDARCROFT SET

"I mean—" he stammered, "that you'll have to acquit me of any intention——"

"You mean," she interrupted quickly, with widely opened eyes, "that you don't *want* to go in to dinner with me? I think that can easily be arranged," and she turned away from him toward her hostess. But he quickly interposed.

"Don't, Miss Loring. Don't do that. It isn't necessary. I didn't want your evening spoiled."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," she said, and the curl of her lip did not escape him. "*That* could hardly happen. But, if you have any doubts about it, perhaps——"

"It was of you I was thinking——"

"That's very kind, I'm sure. I don't see any reason why we shouldn't get on admirably. I'm not so difficult as you seem to suppose. Why *should* you spoil my evening, Mr. Gallatin?"

She turned and looked him full in the eyes; and he knew then what he had suspected at first, that she meant to deny that they had ever met before.

He gazed at her calmly, a slow smile twisting his lips, acknowledging her rebuke, and acquiescing silently in her position.

"I'm sure I don't wish to spoil it. I'm only too happy—to—to be so much honored."

"There!" she laughed easily. "You *can* be polite, can't you? Do you hunt, Mr. Gallatin?" quickly changing the topic to one less personal. "I thought nobody ever dined here unless he was at least first cousin to a Centaur."

"Oh, no," he laughed. "Mrs. Pennington isn't so exclusive as that. But I'm sure she'd have her own quarters in to table if she could. This is quite the liveliest

THE SILENT BATTLE

house! Mrs. Pennington is the most wonderful woman in the world, and the reason is that she absolutely refuses to be bored. She likes Centaurs because they're mostly natural creatures like herself, but she hasn't any use for Dinosaurs!"

A general movement toward the table, and Jane took Phil Gallatin's arm and followed. A huge horse-shoe of Beauties formed the centerpiece, from which emerged the Cedarhurst Steeplechase Cup, won three years in succession by Dick Pennington. The decorations of the room were in red and gold, and a miniature steeplechase course was laid around the table with small fences, brush and water jumps, over which tiny equestrians in pink coats gayly cavorted. Miss Loring found to her delight that the neighbor on her other side was Mr. Worthington. At least she was not to be without resource if the situation grew beyond her. But Mr. Gallatin having made token of his acquiescence, gave no sign of further intrusion. His talk was of the people about them, of their ambitions and their lack of them, of motoring, of country houses and the latest news in Vanity Fair, to which she listened with interest, casually questioning or venturing an opinion. The only rôle possible for her was one of candor, and she played it with cool deliberation, carefully guiding his remarks into the well-buoyed channels of the commonplace.

And while he talked amusedly, gayly even, in the glances that she stole at his profile, she found that he had grown thinner, and that the dark shadows under his eyes, which she remembered, were still to be found there. The fingers of his right hand slowly revolved the stem of a flower. All of his wine glasses she discovered he had turned bowl downward. His cocktail he had slowly pushed aside until it was now hidden in the garland of roses which circled the table. She felt quite sorry for him, as

THE CEDARCROFT SET

he had felt last summer, and now, better attuned to de-
raction than to praise, her mind and instinct both pro-
laimed him, in spite of herself—a gentleman. Coleman
an Duyn had lied to her. She was conscious of Coley
urveying her from his seat across the table with a jaun-
iced eye, and this surveillance, while it made her uncom-
ortable, served to feed the flame of her ire. Coley Van
duyn had lied to her, and the lot of liars was oblivion.

A pause in the conversation when Nina Jaffray's voice
roke in on Mr. Gallatin's right.

"It isn't true, is it, Phil?"

He questioned.

"What they're saying about you," she went on.

He laughed uneasily. "Yes, of course, if it's some-
thing dreadful enough."

"Oh, it isn't dreadful, Phil, only so enchantingly sin-
ful that it doesn't sound like you in the least."

"No, Nina. It isn't true. Enchanting sin and I are
trangers. Miss Loring and I have just been talking
bout original sin in saddle-horses. I contend——"

"Phil, I *won't* be diverted in this way. I believe it's
rue."

"Then what's the use of questioning me?"

"I'm foolish enough to want you to deny it."

"Even if it is an enchanting sin? You might at least
et me flatter myself that much."

Miss Jaffray's long eyes closed the fraction of an
nch, as she surveyed him aslant through her lashes, then
er lips broke into a smile which showed her small and
erfectly even teeth.

"You shan't evade me any longer. I'm insanely
ealous, Phil. *Who* was the girl you got lost with in the
oods?"

Gallatin passed a miserable moment. He had sensed

THE SILENT BATTLE

the question and had tried to prevent it, cold with dismay that Miss Loring should be in earshot. He flushed painfully and for his life's sake could make no reply.

"It's true—you're blushing. I could forgive you for the sin, but for blushing for it—never!"

Gallatin had hoped that Miss Loring might have turned to her other neighbor, but he had not dared to look. Now he felt rather than saw that she was a listener to the dialogue, and he heard her voice—cool, clear, and insistent, just at his ear:

"How very interesting, Nina! Mr. Gallatin's sins are finding him out?"

"No, *I* am," said the girl. "I've known Phil Gallatin since we were children, and he has always been the most unsusceptible of persons. He has never had any time for girls. And now! Now by his guilty aspect he tacitly acknowledges a love affair in the Canadian wilderness with a——"

"Oh, do stop, Nina," he said in suppressed tones. "Miss Loring can hardly be interested in——"

"But *I am*," put in Miss Loring coolly. "Do tell me something more, Nina. Was she young and pretty?"

"Ask this guilty wretch——"

"Don't you know who she was? What was her name?"

"That's just what I want to find out. And nobody seems to know, except Phil."

"Do tell us, Mr. Gallatin."

"She had no name," said Mr. Gallatin very quietly. "There was no girl in the woods."

"A woman, then?" queried Miss Jaffray.

"Neither girl—nor woman—only a Dryad. The woods are full of them. My Indian guide insisted that——"

"Oh, no, you sha'n't get out of it so easily, Phil, and



“Do tell me something more, Nina. Was she young and pretty?”

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THE CEDARCROFT SET

I insist upon your sticking to facts. A Dryad, indeed, with the latest thing in fishing rods and creels!"

Miss Jaffray had not for a moment taken her gaze from Gallatin's face, but now she changed her tone to one of impudent raillery. "You know, Phil, you've always held women in such high regard that I've always thought you positively tiresome. And now, just when I find you developing the most unusual and interesting qualities, you deny their very existence! I was just getting ready to fall madly in love with you. How disappointing you are! Isn't he, Jane?"

"Dreadfully so," said Miss Loring. "Tell it all, Mr. Gallatin, by all means, since we already know the half. I'm sure the reality can't be nearly as dreadful as we already think it is."

Her effrontery astounded him, but he met her fairly.

"There's nothing to tell. If an enchantingly sinful man met an enchantingly helpless Dryad—what would be likely to happen? Can *you* tell us, Miss Loring?"

Jane's weapons went flying for a moment, but she recovered them adroitly.

"The situation has possibilities of which you are in every way worthy, I don't doubt, Mr. Gallatin. The name of your Dryad will, of course, be revealed in time. I'm sure if Miss Jaffray pleads with you long enough you'll gladly tell her."

Nina Jaffray laughed.

"Come, Phil, there's a dear. Do tell a fellow. I've really got to know, if only for the fun of scratching her eyes out. I'm sure I ought to—oughtn't I, Jane?"

But Miss Loring had already turned and was deep in conversation with Mr. Worthington, who for twenty minutes at least, had been trying to attract her attention.

XII

NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN

IT was the custom at Richard Pennington's dinners for the men to follow the ladies at once to the library or drawing-room if they cared to, for Nellie Pennington liked smoking and made no bones about it. People who dined with her were expected to do exactly as they pleased, and this included the use of tobacco in all parts of the house. She was not running a kindergarten, she insisted, and the mothers of timorous buds were amply warned that they must look to the habits of their tender offspring. And so after the ices were served, when the women departed, some of their dinner partners followed them into the other rooms, finding more pleasure in the cigarette *à deux* than in the stable talk at the dismantled dining-table.

Phil Gallatin rose and followed the ladies to the door and then returned, sank into a vacant chair and began smoking, thinking deeply of the new difficulty into which Nina Jaffray had plunged him. A small group of men remained, Larry Kane, William Worthington, Ogden Spencer, and Egerton Savage, who gathered at the end of the table around their host.

"Selected your 1918 model yet, Bibby?" Pennington asked with a laugh. "What is she to be this time? Inside control, of course, maximum flexibility, minimum friction——"

"Oh, forget it, Dick," said Worthington, sulkily.

NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN

“No offense, you know. Down on your luck? Cheer up, old chap, you’ll be in love again presently. There are as many good fish in the sea——”

“I’m not fishing,” put in Bibby with some dignity.

“By George!” whispered Larry Kane, in awed tones, “I believe he’s got it again. Oh, Bibby, when you marry, Venus will go into sackcloth and ashes!”

“So will Bibby,” said Spencer. “Marriage isn’t his line at all. You know better than that, don’t you, Bibby. No demnition bow-wows on *your* Venusberg—what? You’ve got the secret. Love often and you’ll love longer. Aren’t I right, Bibby?”

“Oh, let Bibby alone,” sighed Savage. “He’s got the secret. I take my hat off to him. Every year he bathes in the Fountain of Youth, and like the chap in the book—what’s his name?—gazes at his rejuvenated reflection in the limpid pool of virgin eyes. Look at him! Forty-five, if he’s a day, and looks like a stage juvenile.”

Gallatin listened to the chatter with dull ears, smiling perfunctorily, not because he enjoyed this particular kind of humor, but because he did not choose to let his silence become conspicuous. And when the sounds from a piano were heard and the men rose to join the ladies, he had made a resolve to see Jane Loring alone before the evening was gone.

In the drawing-room Betty Tremaine was playing airs from the latest Broadway musical success, which Durwell De Lancy was singing with a throaty baritone. Jane Loring sat on a sofa next to her hostess, both of them laughing at young Perrine, who began showing the company a new version of the turkey-trot.

“Do a ‘Dance Apache,’ Freddy,” cried Nina Jaffray, springing to her feet. “You know,” and before he knew what she was about, he was seized by the arms, and while

THE SILENT BATTLE

Miss Tremaine caught the spirit of the thing in a gay cadence of the Boulevards, the two of them flew like mad things around the room, to the imminent hazard of furniture and its occupants. There was something barbaric in their wild rush as they whirled apart and came together again and the dance ended only when Freddy Perrine catapulted into a corner, breathless and exhausted. Miss Jaffray remained upright, her slender breast heaving, her eyes dark with excitement, glancing from one to another with the bold challenge of a Bacchante fresh from the groves of Naxos. There was uproarious applause and a demand for repetition, but as no one volunteered to take the place of the exhausted Perrine, the music ceased and Miss Jaffray, after rearranging her disordered hair, threw herself into a vacant chair.

"You're wonderful, Nina!" said Nellie Pennington, languidly, "but how *can* you do it? It's more like wrestling than dancing?"

"I like wrestling," said Miss Jaffray, unperturbedly.

Auction tables were formed in the library and the company divided itself into parties of three or four, each with its own interests. Gallatin soon learned that it might prove difficult to carry his resolution into effect, for Miss Loring was the center of a group which seemed to defy disruption, and Coleman Van Duyn immediately preempted the nearest chair, from which nothing less than dynamite would have availed to dislodge him. Gallatin had heard that Van Duyn had been with the Lorings in Canada, and had wondered vaguely whether this fact could have anything to do with that gentleman's sudden change of manner toward himself. The two men had gone to the same school, and the same university; and while they had never been by temper or inclination in the slightest degree suited to each other, circumstances threw

NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN

them often together and as fellow club-mates they had owed and paid each other a tolerable civility. But this winter Van Duyn's nods had been stiff and his manner taciturn. Personally, Phil Gallatin did not care whether Coleman Van Duyn was civil or not, and only thought of the matter in its possible reference to Jane Loring. Gallatin leaned over the back of the sofa in conversation with Nellie Pennington, listening with one ear to Coley's rather heavy attempts at amiability.

After a while his hostess moved to a couch in the corner and motioned for him to take the place beside her.

"You know, Phil," she began, reproving him in her softest tones, "I've been thinking about you a lot lately. Aren't you flattered? You ought to be. I've made up my mind to speak to you with all the seriousness of my advanced years."

"Yes, Mother, dear," laughed Phil. "What is it now? Have I been breaking window-panes or pulling the cat's tail?"

"Neither—and both," she returned calmly. "But it's your sins of omission that bother me most. You're incorrigibly lazy!"

"Thanks," he said, settling himself comfortably. "I know it."

"And aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Awfully."

"I'm told that you're never in your office, that you've let your practice go to smash, that your partners are on the point of casting you into the outer darkness."

"Oh, that's true," he said wearily. "I've practically withdrawn from the firm, Nellie. I didn't bring any business in. It's even possible that I kept some of it out. I'm a moral and physical incubus. In fact, John Kenyon has almost told me so."

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Do?"

A Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,

A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and thou.

If you'll come with me, Nellie."

There was no response of humor in Nellie Pennington's expression.

"No," she said quietly. "Not I. I want you to be serious, Phil." She paused a moment, looking down, and when her eyes sought his again he saw in them the spark of a very genuine interest. "I don't know whether you know it or not, Phil, but I'm really very fond of you. And if I didn't understand you as well as I do, of course, I wouldn't dare to be so frank."

Philip Gallatin inclined his head slightly.

"Go on, please," he said.

She hesitated a moment and then clutched his arm with her strong fingers.

"I want you to wake up, Phil," she said with sudden insistence. "I want you to wake up, to open your eyes wide—wide, do you hear, to stretch your intellectual fibers and learn something of your own strength. You're asleep, Boy! You've been asleep for years! I want you to wake up—and prove the stuff that's in you. You're the last of your line, Phil, the very last; but whatever the faults your fathers left you, you've got their genius, too."

Gallatin was slowly shaking his head.

"Not that—only——"

"I *know* it," she said proudly. "You can't hide from everybody, Phil. I still remember those cases you won when you were just out of law-school—that political one

NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN

and the other of the drunkard indicted on circumstantial evidence——”

“I was interested in that,” he muttered.

“You’ll be interested again. You *must* be. Do you hear? You’ve come to the parting of the ways, Phil, and you’ve got to make a choice. You’re drifting with the tide, and I don’t like it, waiting for Time to provide your Destiny when you’ve got the making of it in your own hands. You’ve got to put to sea, hoist what sail you’ve got and brave the elements.”

“I’m a derelict, Nellie,” he said painfully.

“Shame! Phil,” she whispered. “A derelict is a ship without a soul. You a derelict! Then society is made up of derelicts, discards from the game of opportunity. Some of us are rich. We think we can afford to be idle. Ambition doesn’t matter to such men as Dick, or Larry Kane, or Egerton Savage. Their lines were drawn in easy places, their lives were ready-made from the hour that they were born. But you! There’s no excuse for you. You are not rich. As the world considers such things, you’re poor and so you’re born for better things! You’ve got the Gallatin intellect, the Gallatin solidity, the Gallatin cleverness——”

“And the Gallatin insufficiency,” he finished for her.

“A fig for your vices,” she said contemptuously. “It’s the little men of this world that never have any vices. No big man ever was without them. Whatever dims the luster of the spirit, the white fire of intellect burns steadily on, unless——” she paused and glanced at him, quickly, lowering her voice——“unless the luster of the spirit is dimmed too long, Phil.”

He clasped his long fingers around one of his knees and looked thoughtfully at the rug.

“I understand,” he said quietly.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"You don't mind my speaking to you so, do you, Phil, dear?"

He closed his eyes, and then opening them as though with an effort, looked at her squarely.

"No, Nellie."

Her firm hand pressed his strongly. "Let me help you, Phil. There are not many fellows I'd go out of my way for, not many of them are worth it. Phil, you've got to take hold at once—right away. Make a fresh start."

"I did take hold for—for a good while and then—and then I slipped a cog——"

"Why? You mean it was too hard for you?"

"No, not at all. It had got so that I wasn't bothered—not much—that is—I let go purposely." He stopped suddenly. "I can't tell you why. I guess I'm a fool—that's all."

She examined his face with a new interest. There was something here she could not understand. She had known Phil Gallatin since his boyhood and had always believed in him. She had watched his development with the eyes of an elder sister, and had never given up the hope that he might carry on the traditions of his blood in all things save the one to be dreaded. She had never talked with him before. Indeed, she would not have done so to-night had it not been that a strong friendly impulse had urged her. She made it a practice never to interfere in the lives of others, if interference meant the cost of needless pain; but as she had said to him, Phil Gallatin was worth helping. She was thankful, too, that he had taken her advice kindly.

What was this he was saying about letting go purposely. What—but she had reached the ends of friendliness and the beginnings of curiosity.

NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN

“No, you’re not a fool, Phil. You sha’n’t call yourself names.” And then, “You say you weren’t bothered—much?”

“No. Things had got a good deal easier for me. I was beginning to feel hopeful for the future. It had cost me something, but I had got my grip. I had started in at the office again, and Kenyon had given me some important work to do. Good old Uncle John! He seemed to know that I was trying.”

He stopped a moment and then went on rapidly. “He turned me loose on a big corporation case the firm was preparing for trial. I threw myself into the thing, body and soul. I worked like a dog—night and day, and every hour that I worked my grip on myself grew stronger. I was awake then, Nellie, full of enthusiasm, my old love of my profession glowing at a white heat that absorbed and swallowed all other fires. It seemed that I found out some things the other fellows had overlooked, and a few days before the big case was to be called, Kenyon asked me if I didn’t want to take charge. I don’t believe he knew how good that made me feel. I seemed to have come into my own again. I knew I could win and I told him so. So he and Hood dropped out and turned the whole thing over to me. I had it all at my fingers’ ends. You know, I once learned a little law, Nellie, and I was figuring on a great victory.”

As Gallatin spoke, his long frame slowly straightened, his head drew well back on his shoulders and a new fire glowed in his eyes.

“It was great!” he went on. “I don’t believe any man alive ever felt more sure of himself than I did when I wound up that case and shut up my desk for the day. If I won, and win I should, it would give Kenyon, Hood and Gallatin a lot of prestige. Things looked pretty

THE SILENT BATTLE

bright that night. I began to see the possibilities of a career, Nellie, a real career that even a Gallatin might be proud of."

He came to a sudden pause, his figure crumpled, and the glow in his eyes faded as though a film had fallen across them.

"And then?" asked Nellie Pennington.

"And then," he muttered haltingly, "something happened to me—I had a—a disappointment—and things went all wrong inside of me—I didn't care what happened. I went to the bad, Nellie, clean—clean to the bad——"

"Yes," said Mrs. Pennington softly, "I heard. That's why I spoke to you to-night. You haven't been——"

"No, thank God, I'm keeping straight now, but it did hurt to have done so well and then to have failed so utterly. You see the case I was speaking of—Kenyon, Hood and Gallatin had turned the whole business over to me, and I wasn't there to plead. They couldn't find me. There was a postponement, of course, but my opportunity had passed and it won't come again."

He stopped, glanced at her face and then turned away. "I don't know why I've told you these things," he finished soberly, "for sympathy is hardly the kind of thing a man in my position can stand for."

Nellie Pennington remained silent. Her interest was deep and her wonder uncontrollable. Therefore, being a woman, she did not question. She only waited. Her woman's eyes to-night had been wide open, and she had already made a rapid diagnosis of which her curiosity compelled a confirmation.

They were alone at their end of the room. Miss Loring and Mr. Van Duyn had gone in to the bridge tables

NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN

and Egerton Savage was conversing in a low tone with Betty Tremaine, whose fingers straying over the piano, were running softly through an aria from "La Bohème."

"You know, Nellie," he went on presently, "I'm not in the habit of talking about my own affairs, even with my friends, but I believe it's done me a lot of good to talk to you. You'll forgive me, won't you?"

She nodded and then went on quickly. "The trouble with you is that you don't talk enough about yourself, Phil. You're a seething mass of introspection. It isn't healthy. Friends are only conversational chopping-blocks after all. Why don't you use them? Me—for instance. I'm safe, sane, and I confess a trifle curious." She paused a moment, and then said keenly:

"It's a girl, of course."

He raised his head quickly, and then lowered it as quickly again.

"No, there isn't any girl."

"Oh, yes, there is. I've known it for quite two hours."

"How?" he asked in alarm.

She waved her fan with a graceful gesture. "Second sight, a sixth sense, an appreciation for the fourth dimension—in short—the instinct of a woman."

"You mean that you guessed?"

"No, that I perceived."

"It takes a woman to perceive something which doesn't exist," he said easily.

She turned and examined him with level brows. "Then why did you admit it?"

"I didn't."

She leaned back among her pillows and laughed at him mockingly. "Oh, Phil! *Must* I be brutal?"

"What do you mean?"

"That the girl—is here—to-night."

THE SILENT BATTLE

"That is not true," he stammered. "She is not here."

Mrs. Pennington did not spare him.

"A moment ago—you denied that there was a girl. Now you're willing to admit that she's only absent. Please don't doubt the accuracy of my feminine deductions, Phil. Nothing provokes me more. You may drive me to the extreme of mentioning her name."

Gallatin stopped fencing. It was an art he was obliged reluctantly to confess, in which he was far from a match for this tantalizing adversary. So he relapsed into silence, aware that the longer the conversation continued the more vulnerable he became.

But she reassured him in a moment.

"Oh, why won't you trust me?" she whispered, her eyes dark with interest. "I do want to help you if you'll let me. It *was* only a guess, Phil, a guess founded on the most intangible evidence, but I couldn't help seeing (you know a heaven-born hostess is Midas-eared and Argus-eyed) what passed between you and Jane Loring."

"Nothing that I'm aware of passed between us," he said quietly. "She was very civil."

"As civil as a cucumber—no more—no less. How could I know that she didn't want to go in to dinner with you?"

"You heard?"

"Yes, from the back of my head. Besides, Phil, I've always told you that your eyes were too expressive." His look of dismay was so genuine that she stopped and laid her hand along his arm. "I was watching you, Phil. That's why I know. I shouldn't have noticed, if I hadn't been."

"Yes," he slowly admitted at last. "Miss Loring and I had met before."

NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN

At that he stopped and would say no more. Instinct warned her that curiosity had drawn her to the verge of intrusiveness, and so she, too, remained silent while through her head a hundred thoughts were racing—benevolent, romantic, speculative, concerning these two young people whom she liked—and one of whom was unhappy. They had met before, on terms of intimacy, but where?

Intimacies worth quarreling over were scarcely to be made in the brief season during which Jane Loring had been in New York, for unlike Mr. Worthington, Phil Gallatin was no cultivator of social squabs. Obviously they had met elsewhere. Last summer? Phil Gallatin was fishing in Canada—Canada! So was Jane! Mrs. Pennington straightened and examined her companion curiously. She had heard the story of Phil Gallatin's wood-nymph and was now thoroughly awake to the reasons for his recalcitrance, so she sank back among her cushions, her eyes downcast, a smile wreathing her lips, the smile of the collector of objects of art and virtue who has stumbled upon a hidden rarity. It was a smile, too, of self-appreciation and approval, for her premises had been negligible and her conclusion only arrived at after a process of induction which surprised her by the completeness of its success. She was already wondering how her information could best serve her purposes as mediator when Gallatin spoke again.

“We had met before, Nellie, under unusual and—and—er—trying conditions. There was a—misunderstanding—something happened—which you need not know—a damage to—to her pride which I would give my right hand to repair.”

“Perhaps, if you could see her alone——”

“Yes, I was hoping for that—but it hardly seems possible here.”

THE SILENT BATTLE

Mrs. Pennington was leaning forward now, slightly away from him, thinking deeply, thoroughly alive to her responsibilities—her responsibilities to Jane Loring as well as to the man beside her. It was the judgment of the world that Phil was a failure—her own judgment, too, in spite of her affection for him; and yet in her breast there still lived a belief that he still had a chance for regeneration. She had seen the spark of it in his eyes, heard the echo of it in tones of his voice when he had spoken of his last failures. She hesitated long before replying, her eyes looking into space, like a seer of visions, as though she were trying to read the riddle of the future. And when she spoke it was with tones of resolution.

“I think it might be managed. Will you leave it to me?”

She gave him her hand in a warm clasp. “I believe in you, Phil, and I understand,” she finished softly.

Gallatin followed her to the door of the library, unquiet of mind and sober of demeanor. He had long known Nellie Pennington to be a wonderful woman and the tangible evidences of her cleverness still lingered as the result of his interview. There seemed to be nothing a woman of her equipment could not accomplish, nothing she could not learn if she made up her mind to it. In twenty minutes of talk she had succeeded in extracting from Gallatin, without unseemly effort, his most carefully treasured secret, and indeed he half suspected that her intuition had already supplied the missing links in the chain of gossip that was going the rounds about him. But he did not question her loyalty or her tact and, happy to trust his fortunes entirely into her hands, he approached the bridge-tables aware that the task which his hostess

NELLIE PENNINGTON CUTS IN

had assumed so lightly was one that would tax her ingenuity to the utmost.

Her last whispered admonition as she left him in the hall had been "Wait, and don't play bridge!" and so he followed her injunction implicitly, wondering how the miracle was to be accomplished. Miss Loring did not raise her head at his approach, and even when the others at the table nodded greetings she bent her head upon her cards and made her bids, carelessly oblivious of his presence.

Miss Jaffray hardly improved his situation when she flashed a mocking glance up at him and laughed. "Satyr!" she said. "I could never have believed it of you, Phil. You were such a nice little boy, too, though you *would* pull my pig-tail!"

"Don't mind Nina, Phil," said Worthington gayly. "Satirical remarks are her long suit, especially when she's losing."

Nina regarded him reproachfully. "There *was* a time, Bibby, when you wouldn't have spoken so unkindly of me. Is this the way you repay your debt of gratitude?"

"Gratitude!"

"Yes, I might have married you, you know."

"Oh, Nina! I'd forgotten."

"Think of the peril you escaped and be thankful!"

"I am," he said devoutly.

"You ought to be." And then to Miss Loring, "Bibby hasn't proposed to you yet, has he, Jane," she asked.

"I don't think so," said Jane laughing. "Have you, Mr. Worthington?"

He flushed painfully and gnawed at his small mustache. Nina had scored heavily.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I hope he does," Jane went on with a sense of throwing a buoy to a drowning man, "because I'm sure I'd accept him."

Worthington smiled gratefully and adored her in fervent silence.

"Men have stopped asking *me* to marry them lately," sighed Nina. "It annoys me dreadfully." She spoke of this misfortune with the same careless tone one would use with reference to a distasteful pattern in wall-paper.

"But think of the hearts you've broken," said Galatin.

"Or of the hearts I wanted to break but couldn't," she replied. "Yours, for instance, Phil."

"You couldn't have tried very hard," he laughed.

"I didn't know you were a satyr then," she said, pushing her chair back from the table. "Your rubber, I think, Bibby. I'm sure we'd better stop, Dick, or you'll never ask me here again."

XIII

MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM

THERE was a general movement of dispersal, and Philip Gallatin, who had now given up all hope of the opportunity Nellie Pennington had promised him, followed the party into the hall, his eyes following Jane, who had found her hostess and was making her adieux. He watched her slender figure as she made her way up the stairs, and turned to Mrs. Pennington reproachfully.

"Don't speak, Phil," his hostess whispered. "It's all arranged. Go at once and get your things."

Gallatin obeyed quickly and when he came down he heard Mrs. Pennington saying, "So sorry, Jane. Your machine came, but the butler sent it home again. There was some mistake in the orders, it seems. But I've ordered my brougham, and it's waiting at the door for you. You don't mind, do you? I've asked Mr. Gallatin to see that you get home safely."

"Of course, it's very kind of you, dear." She hesitated. "But it seems too bad to trouble Mr. Gallatin."

"I'm sure—I'm delighted," he said, and it was evident that he meant it.

Jane Loring glanced around her quickly, helplessly as she seemed to Gallatin, but the sight of Coleman Van Duyn, waiting hat in hand, helped her to a decision.

"It's so kind of you, Mr. Gallatin," she said gratefully, and then, in a whisper as she kissed her hostess,

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Nellie, you're simply odious!" and made her way out of the door.

Gallatin followed quickly, but Miss Loring reached the curb before him and giving her number to the coachman, got in without the proffered hand of her escort.

Angry though she was, Jane Loring kept her composure admirably. All the world, it seemed, was conspiring to throw her with this man whom she now knew she must detest. If fate, blind and unthinking, had made him her dinner partner, only design, malicious and uncivil, could be blamed for his presence now. She sat in her corner, her figure tense, her head averted, her wraps carefully drawn about her, a dark and forbidding wraith of outraged dignity, waiting only for him to speak that she might crush him.

Gallatin sat immovable for a moment, conscious of all the feminine forces arrayed against him.

"I make no apologies," he began with an assurance which surprised her. "I wanted to see you alone and no other chance offered. I suppose I might say I'm sorry, but that wouldn't be true. I'm not sorry and I don't want any misunderstandings. I asked Mrs. Pennington——"

"Oh!" she broke in wrathfully. "Many people, it seems, enjoy your confidences, Mr. Gallatin."

"No," he went on, steadily. "I'm not given to confidences, Miss Loring. Mrs. Pennington is one of my oldest and best friends. I told her it was necessary for me to see you alone for a moment and she took pity on me."

"Mrs. Pennington has taken an unpardonable liberty and I shall tell her so," said Jane decisively.

"I hope you won't do that."

"Have matters reached such a point in New York

MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM

hat a girl can't drive out alone without being open to the importunity of any stranger?"

"I am not a stranger," he put in firmly, and his voice dominated hers. "We met within the Gates of Chance, Miss Loring, on equal terms. I have the right of any man to plead——"

"You've already pleaded."

"You were prejudiced. I've appealed—to a higher tribunal—your sense of justice."

"I know no law but my own instinct."

"You are not true to your own instincts then, or they are not true to you."

It was sophistry, of course, but she was a trifle startled at the accuracy of his deduction, for she realized that it was her judgment only that rejected him and that her instincts advised her of the pleasure she took in his company. Her instincts then being unreliable, she followed her judgment blindly, uncomfortably conscious that she did it against her will, and angry with herself that it was so.

"I only know, Mr. Gallatin," she said coldly, "that both judgment and instinct warn me against you. Whatever there is left in you of honor—of decency, must surely respond to my distaste for this intrusion."

"If I admit that I'm neither honorable nor decent, will you give me the credit for speaking the truth?" he asked slowly.

"With reference to what?" scornfully.

"To this story they're telling."

"You brought it here, of course."

"Will you believe me if I say that I didn't?"

"Why should I believe you?"

"Simply because I ask you to."

THE SILENT BATTLE

She looked out of the carriage window away from him.

“I believed in you once, Mr. Gallatin.”

He bowed his head.

“Even that is something,” he said. “You wouldn’t have believed in me then if instinct had forbidden it. I am the same person you once believed in.”

“My judgment was at fault. I dislike you intensely.”

“I won’t believe it.”

“You must. You did me an injury that nothing can repair.”

“An injury to your dignity, to your womanhood and sensibility——”

“Hardly,” she said scornfully, “or even to my pride. It was only my body—you hurt, Mr. Gallatin—your kisses—they soiled me——”

“My God, Jane! Don’t! Haven’t you punished me enough? I was mad, I tell you. There was a devil in me, that owned me body and soul, that stole my reason, killed what was good, and made a monster of the love I had cherished—an insensate enemy that perverted and brutalized every decent instinct, a Thing unfamiliar to you which frightened and drove you away in fear and loathing. It was not *me* you feared, Jane, for you trusted me. It was the Thing you feared, as I fear it, the Enemy that had pursued me into the woods where I had fled from it.”

Jane Loring sat in her corner apparently unconcerned, but her heart was throbbing and the hands beneath the wide sleeves of her opera kimono were nervously clutched. The sound of his voice, its deep sonorous tones when aroused were familiar to her. As he paused she stole a glance at him, for as he spoke of his Enemy he had turned away from her, his eyes peering out into the

MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM

dimly lighted street, as if the mention of his weakness shamed him.

"I'm not asking you for your pity," he went on more steadily, "I only want your pardon. I don't think it's too much to ask. It wasn't the real Phil Gallatin who brought that shame on you."

"The real Phil Gallatin! Which is the real Phil Gallatin?" she asked cruelly.

"What you make him—to-night," he replied quickly. "I've done what I can without you—lived like an outcast on the memories of happiness, but I can't subsist on that. Memory is poor food for a starving man."

"I can't see how I can be held accountable. I did not make you, Mr. Gallatin."

"But you can mar me. I've come," he remembered the words of Mrs. Pennington, "I've come to the parting of the ways. Up there—I gained my self-respect—and lost it. The best of me you saw and the worst of me. You knew me only for five days and yet no one in the world can know me exactly as you do."

"The pity of it——"

"The best of me and the worst of me, the man in me and the beast in me, my sanity and my madness. All these you saw. The record is at least complete."

"I hope so."

"I could not lie to you nor cheat you with false sentiment. I played the game fairly until—until then."

"Yes—until then."

"You cared for me, there in the woods. I earned your friendship. And I hoped that the time had come when I could prove—to you, at least, that I was not to be found wanting."

"And yet—you failed," she said.

"Yes, I failed. Oh, I don't try to make my sin any

THE SILENT BATTLE

the less. I only want you to remember the circumstances—to acquit me of any intention to do you harm. I am no despoiler of women, even my enemies will tell you so. That, thank God, was not a part of my heritage. I have always looked on women of your sort with a kind of wonder. I have never understood them—nor they me. I thought of them as I thought of pictures or of children, things set apart from the grubby struggle for material and moral existence. I liked to be with them because their ways fell in pleasant places and because, in respecting them, I could better learn to respect myself. God knows, I respected you—honored you! Don't say you don't believe that!"

"I—I think you did——" she stammered.

"I tried to show you how much. You knew what was in my heart. I would have died for you—or lived for you, if you could have wished it so."

He paused a moment, his brows tangled in thought.

"I learned many things up there—things that neither men nor women nor books had taught me, something of the directness and persistence of the forces of nature, the binding contract of a man's body with his soul, the glorification of labor and the meaning of responsibility. I was happy there—happy as I had never been before. I wanted the days to be longer so that I could work harder for you, and my pride in your comfort was the greatest pride I have ever known. You were my fetich—the symbol of Intention. You made me believe in myself, and defied the Enemy that was plucking at my elbow. I could have lived there always and I prayed in secret that we might never be found. I wanted you to believe in me as I was already beginning to believe in myself. Whatever I had been—here in the world—up there at least I was a success. I wanted to prove it thoroughly

MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM

—to kill, that you might eat and be warm—to hew and build, that you might be comfortable. I wanted a shrine for you, that I might put you there and keep you—always. I worshiped you, Jane, God help me, as I worship you now.”

His voice trembled and broke as he paused.

“I—I must not listen to you, Mr. Gallatin,” she said hurriedly, for her heart was beating wildly.

“I worship you, Jane,” he repeated, “and I ask for nothing but your pardon.”

“I—I forgive you,” she gasped.

“I’m glad of that. I’ll try to deserve your indulgence,” he said slowly. He stopped again, and it was a long time before he went on. The brougham was moving rapidly up the Avenue and the turmoil of night sounds was fading into silence. Forty-second Street was already behind them, and the fashionable restaurants were gay with lights. He seemed to realize then that Jane would soon reach her destination, and he went on quickly, as though there were still much that he must say in the little time left to him to say it in. “I suppose it would be too much if I asked you to let me see you once in a while,” he said quickly, as though he feared her refusal.

“I—I’ve no doubt that we’ll meet, Mr. Gallatin.”

“I don’t mean that,” he persisted. “I don’t think I’ll be—I don’t think I’ll go around much this winter. I want to talk to you, if you’ll let me. I—I can’t give you up—I need you. I need your belief in me, the incentive of your friendship, your spell to exorcise the—the Thing that came between us.”

“I am trying to forget that,” she murmured. “It would be easier if—if you hadn’t said what you did.”

“What did I say? I don’t know,” he said passionately.

THE SILENT BATTLE

“That you—you loved me. It was the brute in you that spoke—not the man, the beast that kissed— Oh!” She brushed the back of her hand across her eyes. “It was not you! The memory of it will never go.”

He hung his head in shame.

“No, no, don’t!” he muttered. “You’re crucifying me!”

“If you had not said that——”

“It was monstrous. It was madness, but it was sweet.”

“Love is not brutal—does not shame—nor frighten,” she said slowly. “You had been so—so clean—so calm——”

“It was Arcadia, Jane,” he whispered, “your Arcadia and mine. It was the love in me that spoke, whatever I said—the love of a man, or of a beast, if you like. But it spoke truly. There were no conventions there but those of the forest, no laws but those of the heart. I had known you less than a week, and I had known you always. And you—up there—you loved me. Yes, it’s true. Do you think I couldn’t read in your eyes?”

“No, no,” she protested. “It isn’t true. I—I didn’t love you—I don’t——”

He had captured one of her hands and was leaning toward her, his voice close at her ear, vibrant with emotion.

“You loved me—up there, Jane. The forest knew. The stream sang of it. It was in Kee-way-din and the rain. It was part of the primeval, when we lived a thousand years ago. Don’t you remember? I read it in your eyes that night when I came in with the deer. You ran out to meet me, like the cave-woman to greet her man. I was no longer the fugitive who had built your hut, or

MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM

made your fires. You had learned that I was necessary to you, in other ways, not to your body—but to your spirit.”

“No. It’s not true.”

“That night you fed me—watched by me. I saw your eyes in my dreams, the gentleness in them, their compassion, their perfect womanliness. Such wonderful dreams! And when I awoke you were still there. I wanted to tell you then that I knew—but I couldn’t. It would have made things difficult for you. Then I got sick——”

“Don’t, Mr. Gallatin!”

He had taken her in his arms and held her face so that her lips lay just beneath his own.

“Tell me the truth. You loved me then. You love me now? Isn’t it so?”

Her lips were silent, and one small tear trembled on her cheeks. But he kissed it away.

“Look up at me, Jane. Answer. Whatever I am, whatever I hope to be, you and I are one—indivisible. It has been so since the beginning. There is no brute in me now, dear. See. I am all tenderness and compassion. One fire burns out another. I’ll clean your lips with new kisses—gentle ones—purge off the baser fire. I love you, Jane. And you——?”

“Yes—yes,” she whispered faintly. “I do love you. I—I can’t help it.”

“Do you want to help it?”

“No. I don’t want to help it.”

“Kiss me, Jane.”

She raised her moist lips to his and he took them.

Past and Future whirled about their ears, dinning the alarm, but they could not hear it, for the voice of the present, the wonderful present was singing in their hearts.

THE SILENT BATTLE

The brougham rolled noiselessly on, and they did not know or care. Fifth Avenue was an Elysian Field, and their journey could only end in Paradise.

"Say it again," he whispered.

She did.

"I can't see your eyes, Jane. I want to see them now. They're like they were—up there—aren't they? They're not cold, or scornful, or mocking, as they've been all evening—not cruel as they were—in the Park? It's you, isn't it? Really you?"

"Yes, what's left of me," she sighed. "It's so sweet," she whispered. "I've dreamed of it—but I didn't think it could ever be. I was afraid of you——"

"Oh, Jane! How cruel you were!"

"I had to be. I *had* to hurt you."

"Why?"

"Because of my own pain. I wanted to make you suffer—as I suffered—only more."

"I did. Much more. You're not afraid of me now?"

"No, no. I'm not afraid of you. I shouldn't be—be where I am, if I were."

He took pains to give her locality a new definiteness.

"I'm not—what you thought I was?" he asked after that.

"No—yes—that is—I don't know——"

"Jane!"

"I mean—I don't believe I ever thought you anything but what you are."

"You blessed child. And what am I?"

"A—a person. A dark-haired person—with a—face."

"Is that all?"

"No. And an unshaven chin, a soiled flannel shirt, and a brown felt hat with two holes punched in it."

MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM

"Have I always been that?"

"Yes—always."

"You liked that—that person better than you do this one?"

"I'm—not sure." She straightened suddenly in his arms and drew away to look at him. "Why—I've only known you—I only met you a few hours ago. It's dreadful of me—Mr. Gallatin."

"Phil," he corrected.

"Phil, then. The suddenness of everything—I'm not quite sure of myself——"

"I'm not either. I'm afraid I'll wake up."

"You're not the person with the glowering eyes," she went on, "and the—the stubby chin—or the slouch hat and smelly pipe——"

"I'm too happy to glower. I couldn't if I wanted to. But I've got the hat and the smelly pipe. I can make the chin stubby again—if you'll only wait a few days."

"I don't think I—I'd like it stubby now."

He laughed. But she stopped him again.

"I—I wish you'd tell me——"

She paused and he questioned.

"Something bothers me dreadfully."

"What?"

"You didn't think—when you—came with me to-night—that I could be convinced—that you could—could win so easily, did you?"

"No, dear. I didn't—I——"

"Quickly—or I shall die of shame."

"I had no hope—none at all. I just wanted you to know how things were with me. Thank God, you listened."

"How could I do anything else but listen—in a brougham—I couldn't have jumped out into the street. Besides, you might have jumped, too."

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I *would* have," he said grimly.

"It would have made a scene."

"I hadn't thought of that."

"And the coachman—Mrs. Pennington would have known. Oh, don't you see? Mrs. Pennington only introduced us to-night——"

She drew away from him and looked out of the carriage window. They had reached a neighborhood which was unfamiliar to her, where the houses were smaller and the lights less frequent, and upon the left-hand side there was no Park.

"There is some mistake," she said a little bewildered. "We have come a long way."

He followed her look and laughed outright.

"We're above the Park," he said, opening the door. And then to the coachman. "You got the wrong number."

"One Hundred and Twentieth, sir," came a voice promptly.

"*One Hundred and Twenty!* Where are we now, Dawson?"

"Hundred and Ten, sir."

Gallatin laughed, but Jane had sunk back in her corner in confusion.

"I said *Seventieth* distinctly," she murmured. "I'm *sure* I did."

"You'd better turn now," said Gallatin to the man.

"Where to, sir?"

"To the Battery——"

"Mr. Gal—Phil!" cried Jane.

"I beg pardon, sir," said Dawson.

Gallatin concealed his delight with difficulty.

"We've come too far, Dawson," he said. "Miss Loring lives in *Seventieth* Street."

"I'm sorry, sir," came a voice.

MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM

Gallatin shut the door and the vehicle turned.

Jane sat very straight in her corner and her fingers were rearranging her disordered hair.

"Oh, Phil,—I'm shamed. How *could* I have let him go past——"

"There are no numbers on the streets of Paradise."

"It must be frightfully late."

"—or watches in the pockets of demigods——"

"*Will* you be serious!"

"Demigods are too happy to be serious."

"That poor horse——"

"A wonderful horse, a horse among horses, but he goes too fast. He'll be there in no time. Can't we take a turn in the Park?"

He stretched his hand toward the door, but she seized him by the arm.

"I forbid it. If Mrs. Pennington knew——" she stopped again in consternation. "Phil! Do you think that Nellie Pennington——"

"I don't know. She's a wonderful woman—keeps amazing horses—extraordinary coachmen——"

"Could she have told the man—to mistake me—purposely?"

"I think so," he said brazenly. "She's capable of anything—anything—wonderful wom——"

"Phil, I'll be angry with you."

"No, you can't."

He took her in his arms again and she discovered that what he said was true. She didn't want to be angry. Besides, what did it matter, about anything or anybody else in the world.

"I don't know how this could have happened. I've hated you, Phil," she confessed after a while. "Oh, how I've hated you!"

THE SILENT BATTLE

"No."

"Oh, yes. It's true. I hated you. I really did. You were the living emblem of my disgrace. When you got in here beside me to-night, I loathed you. I'm still angry with myself. I can't understand how I could have yielded so—so completely."

"It all happened a thousand years ago."

"Yes, I know it. Up there—I seemed to remember that."

"So did I—the same stream, the same rocks, the forest primeval."

"And the voices——"

"Yes. You couldn't change things. They were meant to be—from the beginning."

She drew closer into his arms and whispered.

"It frightens me a little, though."

"What?"

"That it has happened in spite of me. That I had no power to resist."

"Do you want to resist?"

"No, not now—not now."

"You make me immortal. There's no need to be frightened for me or for you. The strength of the ages is in me, Jane. I'll win out, dear," he whispered. "I'll win out. For you—for us both."

"I believe it," she sighed. "It's in you to win. I've known that, too. You must put the—the Enemy to rout, Phil. I'll help you. It's my Enemy as well as yours now. We'll face it together—and it will fall. I know it will."

He laughed.

"God bless you for that. I'm not afraid of it. We've conjured it away already. You've put me in armor, Jane. We'll turn its weapons aside."

"Yes, I'm sure of it."

MRS. PENNINGTON'S BROUGHAM

She looked up at him and by the glow of a street lamp he saw that she was afraid no longer, for in her eyes was a light of love and faith unalterable.

She could not know, nor did he, that outside in the darkness beside their vehicle, his weapons sheathed, baffled and thwarted for the moment, but still undismayed, strode the Enemy.

XIV

THE JUNIOR MEMBER

THE offices of Kenyon, Hood and Gallatin were in the Mills Building, and consisted of six rooms, one for each of the members of the firm, and three for the clerks, stenographers and library. They were plainly but comfortably furnished, and gave no token of extraordinary prosperity or the lack of it. In no sense did they resemble the magnificent suites which were maintained elsewhere in the building by more precocious firms which had discovered the efficacy of the game of "bluff," and which used it in their business with successful consistency. And yet there was an air of solidity here which indicated a conservatism more to the liking of the class of people who found use for the services of Kenyon, Hood and Gallatin.

John Kenyon, the senior member, belonged to that steadily decreasing class of lawyers who look upon their profession as a calling with traditions. He belonged to an older school of practitioners which still clung to the ethics of a bygone generation. The business of many big corporations went up in the elevator which passed before the door of John Kenyon's private office to a floor above, where its emissaries could learn how to take the money that belonged to other people without being jailed, or, having been jailed, how they could most quickly be freed to obtain the use of their plunder. But Mr. Kenyon made no effort to divert this tide. He wanted no part of it in his office.

THE JUNIOR MEMBER

The corporate interests which he represented were for the most part those which required his services to resist the depredations planned upstairs.

John Kenyon would have been a great lawyer but for the lack of one important ingredient of greatness—imagination. His knowledge of the law was extraordinary. His mind was crystal-clear, analytical but not inventive, judicial but not prophetic. He would have graced the robes of a Justice of the Supreme Bench; but as a potent force in modern affairs he was not far from mediocrity. He had begun his career in the office of Philip Gallatin's grandfather, had been associated with Philip Gallatin's father, but with the passing of the old firm he had opened offices of his own. The initiative which he lacked had been supplied by Gordon Hood, a brisk Bostonian of the omniscient type; and the accession of young Philip Gallatin four years ago had done still more to supply the ingredients which modern conditions seemed to require. It had meant much to John Kenyon to have Phil in the firm, for the perspective of Time had done little to dim the luster which hung about the name of Gallatin and the junior member had shown early signs that he, too, was possessed of much of the genius of his forebears.

Kenyon had watched the development of the boy with mingled delight and apprehension and, with the memory of the failings of his ancestors fresh in his mind, had done what he could to avert impending evil. It was at his advice that young Gallatin had gone to the Canadian woods, and he had noted with interest and not a little curiosity his return to his desk two months ago sobered and invigorated. Phil had plunged into the work which awaited him with quiet intention, and the way he had taken hold of his problems and solved them, had filled the senior partner with new hopes for his future. He

THE SILENT BATTLE

loved the boy as he could have loved a son, as he must love the son of Evelyn Westervelt, and it had taken much to destroy John Kenyon's belief in Phil's ultimate success. But this last failure had broken that faith. Through the efforts of Gordon Hood the firm had won the suit for which Phil Gallatin had prepared it, but it was an empty victory to John Kenyon, who had seen during the preparation of the case Phil Gallatin's chance, his palingenesis—the restitution of all his rights, physical and moral.

Fully aware of John Kenyon's attitude toward him, for two weeks Philip Gallatin had remained uptown and, until his dinner at Mrs. Pennington's, to which he had gone in response to especial pleading, had hidden himself even from his intimates. He had sent word to John Kenyon that he was indisposed, but both men knew what his absence meant. John Kenyon had been the one rock to which Phil Gallatin had tied, the one man with whom he had been willing to talk of himself, the one man of all his friends from whom he would even take a reproach. It was on John Kenyon's account, more even than on his own, that Gallatin so keenly suffered for his failure at the critical moment. The time had indeed come for a reckoning, and yesterday Gallatin had planned to retire from the firm and save his senior partner the pains of further responsibility on his account. He had been weighed in the balance, a generous balance with weights which favored him, and had been found wanting.

But last night a miracle had happened and the visit of renunciation which he had even planned for this very morning had been turned into one of contrition and appeal. And difficult as he found the interview before him, he entered the office with a light step and a face aglow with the new resolution which had banished the somber shadow that for so long had hung about him.

THE JUNIOR MEMBER

It was early, and the business of the day had just begun. At his appearance several of the stenographers looked up from their work and scrutinized him with interest, and the chief clerk rose and greeted him.

"Good morning, Tooker," he nodded cheerfully. "Is Mr. Kenyon in yet?"

"No, sir. It's hardly his time——"

"Please tell him I'd like to see him if he can spare me a moment."

Then he entered a door which bore his name and closed it carefully behind him, opened his desk, glanced at his watch, made two or three turns up and down the room and then took up the telephone book, Logan—Lord—Lorimer, Loring. There it was. 7000 Plaza. He hesitated again and then rang up the number.

It was some moments before the butler consented to get Miss Loring, and when he did she did not recognize his voice.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Can't you guess?"

"Oh, Phil! I didn't know you at all. Where are you?"

"At the office."

"Already! And I'm not out of bed!"

"Did I wake you? I'm sorry——"

"I'm glad. I didn't mean to go to sleep, but I did sleep, somehow——"

"I haven't been asleep. I couldn't——"

"Why not?"

"It's so much pleasanter to be awake."

"I think so, too, but then I dreamed, Phil."

"Pleasant dreams?"

"Oh, beautiful ones, full of demigods and things."

"What things?"

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Enchanted broughams. Oh, how did it happen, Phil?"

"It had to happen."

"I can't believe it yet."

He laughed. "If I were there I'd try to convince you."

"Yes, I think you could. I'm willing to admit that."

"Are you sorry?"

"N-o. But I'm so used to being myself. I can't understand. It's strange—that's all. And I'm glad you called me. I've had a terrifying feeling that you must be somebody else, too."

"I *am* somebody else."

"I mean somebody I don't know very well."

"There's a remedy for that."

"What?"

"Doses of demigod. Repeat every hour."

"Oh——!"

"Don't you like the prescription?"

"I—I think so."

"Then why not try it?"

"I—I think I ought to, oughtn't I?"

"I'm sure of it. In a day or so the symptoms you speak of will entirely disappear."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"I—I think they're less acute already. You really *are* you, aren't you?"

"If I wasn't, you wouldn't be *you*, don't you see?"

"Yes, and I'd be frightfully jealous if I had been somebody else." She laughed. "Oh, Phil! What a conversation! I hope no one is listening."

"I'm sure they're not. They couldn't understand anyway."

THE JUNIOR MEMBER

“Not unless they’re quite mad—as we are. What are you doing? Working?”

“Yes, drawing a deed for an acre in Paradise.”

“Don’t be foolish. Who for?”

“Me. And there’s a deed of trust.”

“I’ll sign that.”

“We’ll both sign it. It’s well secured, Jane. Don’t you believe me?”

“Yes, I do,” slowly.

There was a pause and then he asked, “When can I see you?”

“Soon.”

“This afternoon?”

“I’ve a luncheon.”

“And then——”

“Tea at the——Oh, Phil, I’ll have to cut that. There’s a dance to-night, too, the Ledyards’.”

“This is getting serious.”

“What can I do? I’ve been frightfully rude already. Can’t you go?”

“Not sufficiently urged.”

“Then I shan’t either. I don’t want to go. I want—the acre of Paradise.”

“Where will I meet you, Jane?”

“Here—at four.”

“I’ll be there.”

“Until then, good-by, and, Phil——”

“Yes.”

“Please wear that flannel shirt, disreputable hat and——”

“And the beard?”

“No—not the beard. But I want to be convinced there’s no mistake.”

“I’d rather convince you without them.”

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Oh, I've no doubt you will," she sighed. "There's so much I've got to say to you, Phil. I won't know where to begin——"

"Just where you stopped."

"But I—I wasn't saying anything—just then. I couldn't. There—there were reasons."

He laughed gayly.

"I've still other reasons."

"Oh!"

"Convincing ones."

"Phil, I won't listen. Good-by!"

"Good-by."

"Hadn't we better go for a walk?" she asked.

"No—please——"

"Oh, very well," with a tone of resignation. "There—you see, I'm submitting again. At four, then. Good-by." She cut off and he hung up the receiver, sitting for a long while motionless, looking out of the window. He took out his watch and was examining it impatiently when the chief clerk came in.

"Mr. Kenyon will see you now, Mr. Gallatin," he said.

John Kenyon paused in the reading of his mail and looked up over the half-moons in his glasses when Gallatin appeared at the door.

"Come in, Phil," he said quietly, offering his hand. He sat down at his desk again and formally indicated the chair nearest it. His manner was kindly and full of an old-fashioned dignity, indicating neither indifference nor encouragement, and this seemed to make Philip Gallatin's position if anything more difficult and painful. Instead of sitting, Gallatin turned toward the window and stood there.

"I've come back, Uncle John," he muttered.

Kenyon glanced up at him, the calm judicial glance

THE JUNIOR MEMBER

of a man who, having no venal faults himself, tolerates them in others with difficulty. There was no family relationship between the men, and Gallatin's use of the familiar term at this time meant much, and something in Phil Gallatin's pose arrested Kenyon's eye, the jaw that had worked forward and was now clamped tightly by its throbbing muscles, the bulk of the squared shoulders and the decision with which one hand clasped the chair-back.

"I'm glad of that, Phil," he said. "I was on the point of thinking you had given me up."

"I had. I had given you up. I haven't been down here because I knew it wasn't necessary for me to come and because I thought you'd understand."

"I understood."

"I wrote you two or three letters, but I tore them up. I wanted to sever my connection with the firm. I wanted to save you the pain of thinking about me any longer. I knew I hadn't any right here, that I haven't had any right here for a long while—two or three years, that I had been taking my share of fees I had never earned, and that it was only through your friendship for me that I've been encouraged to stay as long as this. I wanted to save you the pain of talking to me again——"

"I've never denied you my friendship, Phil. I don't deny it now. I only thought that you might have——"

Gallatin turned swiftly and raised his hand.

"Don't, Mr. Kenyon! For God's sake, don't reproach me," he said ardently. "Reproaches won't help me—only wound. They've already been ringing in my ears for days—since the last time——" he paused.

"Never mind."

Gallatin strode the length of the room, struggling for the control of his voice, and when he came back it was to stand facing the senior partner quite composed.

THE SILENT BATTLE

“There isn’t a man in the world who would do as much for one who merited so little. I’m not going over that. Words can’t mean much from me to you; but what I would like you to know is that I don’t want to go out of the firm, and that, if you’ll bear with me, I want another chance to prove myself. I’ve never promised anything. You’ve never asked me to. Thank God, that much of my self-respect at least is saved out of the ruins. I want to give my word now——”

“Don’t do that,” said Kenyon hurriedly. “It isn’t necessary.”

“Yes, I must. I’ve given it to myself, and I’ll keep it, never fear. That—was the last—the very last.”

Kenyon twisted his thin body in his chair and looked up at the junior member keenly, but as he did so his eyes blurred and he saw, as thirty years ago he had seen the figure of this boy’s father standing as Phil Gallatin was standing enmeshed in the toils of Fate, gifted, handsome, lovable—and yet doomed to go, a mental and physical ruin, before his time. The resemblance of Philip Gallatin to his father was striking—the same high forehead, heavy brows and deep-set eyes, the same cleanly cut aquiline nose, and heavy chin. There were lines, too, in Phil Gallatin’s face, lines which had appeared in the last two years which made the resemblance even more assured. And yet to John Kenyon, there seemed to be a difference. There was something of Evelyn Westervelt in him, too, the clean straight line of the jawbone and the firmly modeled lips, thinner than the father’s and more decisive.

“I’m glad of that, Phil,” he said slowly.

“I’m not asking you to believe in me again. Broken faith can’t be repaired by phrases. I don’t want you to believe in me until I’ve made good. I want to come in here again on sufferance, as you took me in six years ago,

THE JUNIOR MEMBER

without a share in the business of the firm that I don't make myself or for which I don't give my services. I want to begin at the bottom of the ladder again and climb it rung by rung."

"Oh, I can't listen to that. Our partnership agreement——"

"That agreement is canceled. I don't want a partnership agreement. It's got to be so. I've been thinking hard, Mr. Kenyon. It's responsibility I need——"

"You're talking nonsense, Phil. You did more work in the Marvin case than either Hood or myself."

"Perhaps, but I didn't win it," he said quickly.

"The firm did."

"I can't agree with you. I'll come in this office on the conditions I suggest, or I must withdraw. My mind is made up on that. I don't want to go, and it won't be easier for me anywhere else. This is where I belong, and this is where I want to fight my battle, if I can do it in my own way without the moral or financial help of any one—of you, least of all."

Gallatin paused and walked, his head bent, the length of the room. John Kenyon followed him with his eyes, then turned to the window and for a long while remained motionless. Philip Gallatin returned to the vacant chair and sat leaning forward eagerly.

The senior partner turned at last, his kind homely face alight with a smile.

"You don't need my faith, my boy, if you've got faith of your own, but I give it to you gladly. Give me your hand." He got up and the two men clasped hands, and Phil Gallatin's eyes did not flicker or fade before the searching gaze of the other man. It was a pact, none the less solemn for the silence with which one of them entered into it.

THE SILENT BATTLE

“You’re awake, Phil?” he asked.

“Yes, that’s it, Uncle John. Awake,” said Gallatin.

“I’m glad—I’m very glad. And I believe it. I’ve never been able to get used to the idea of your being really out of here. We need you, my boy, and I’ve got work for you, of the kind that will put your mettle to the test. There’s a great opportunity in it, and I’ll gladly turn it over to you. ‘*Sic itur ad astra,*’ my boy. Will you take it?”

“Gladly. A corporation case?”

“*Sanborn et al. vs. The Sanborn Mining Company.* Sit here and I’ll explain it to you.”

XV

DISCOVERED

WOMEN have a code of their own, a system of signals, a lip and sign language perfectly intelligible among themselves, but mystifying, as they purpose it to be, to mere man. Overweening husbands, with a fine air of letting the cat out of the bag, have been known to whisper that these carefully guarded secrets are no secrets at all, and that women are merely children of a larger growth, playing at hide and seek with one another (and with their common enemy) for the mere love of the game, that there are no mysteries in their natures to be solved, and that the vaunted woman's instinct, like the child's, is as apt to be wrong as often as it is right. Of course, no one believes this, and even if one did, man would go his way and woman hers. Woman would continue to believe in the accuracy of her intuitions and man would continue to marvel at them. Woman would continue to play at hide and seek, and man would continue to enjoy the game.

Call them by what name you please, instinct, intuition, or guesswork, Mrs. Richard Pennington had succeeded by methods entirely feminine, in discovering that Phil Gallatin's Dryad was Jane Loring, that he was badly in love with her and that Jane was not indifferent to his attentions. Phil Gallatin had not been difficult to read, and Mrs. Pennington took a greater pride in the discovery of Jane's share in the romance, for she knew when Jane left

THE SILENT BATTLE

her house in company with Phil that her intuition had not erred.

Jane Loring had kissed her on both cheeks and called her "odious."

This in itself was almost enough, but to complete the chain of evidence, she learned that Dawson, her head coachman, in the course of execution of her orders, had gone as far North as 125th Street before his unfortunate mistake of Miss Loring's number had been discovered by the occupants of the brougham.

Mrs. Pennington realized that this last bit of evidence had been obtained at the expense of a breach of hospitality, for she was not a woman who made a practice of talking with her servants, but she was sure that the ends had justified the means and the complete success of her maneuver more than compensated for her slight loss of self-respect in its accomplishment.

But while her discovery pleased her, she was not without a sense of responsibility in the matter. She had been hoping for a year that a girl of the right kind would come between Phil and the fate he seemed to be courting, for since his mother's death he had lived alone, and seclusion was not good for men of his habits. She had wanted Phil to meet Jane Loring, and her object in bringing them together had been expressed in a definite hope that they would learn to like each other a great deal. But now that she knew what their relations were, she was slightly oppressed by the thought of unpleasant possibilities.

It was in the midst of these reflections that Miss Jaffray was announced, and in a moment she entered the room with a long half-mannish, half-feline stride and took up her place before the mantelpiece where she stood, her feet apart, toasting her back at the open fire. Mrs. Pennington indicated the cigarettes, and Nina Jaffray took

DISCOVERED

ne, rolling it in her fingers and tapping the end of it on her wrist to shake out the loose dust as a man would do.

"I'm flattered, Nina," said Nellie Pennington. "To what virtue of mine am I indebted for the earliness of this visit?"

"I slept badly," said Nina laconically.

"And I'm the anodyne? Thanks."

"Oh, no; merely an antidote."

"For what?"

"Myself. I've got the blues."

"You! Impossible."

"Oh, yes. It's quite true. I'm quite wretched."

"Dressmaker or milliner?"

"Neither. Just bored, I think. You know I've been out five years now. Think of it! And I'm twenty-four. Isn't that enough to make an angel weep?"

"It's too sad to mention," said Mrs. Pennington. "You used to be such a nice little thing, too."

Nina Jaffray raised a hand in protest.

"Don't, Nellie, it's no joke, I can tell you. I'm *not* a nice little thing any longer, and I know it. I'm a hoydenish, hard-riding, loud-spoken vixen, and that's the truth. I wish I *was* a 'nice little thing' as you call it, like Jane Loring for instance, with illusions and hopes and a proclivity for virtue. I'm not. I like the talk of men——"

"That's not unnatural—so do I."

"I mean the talk of men among men. They interest me, more what they say than what they are. They're genuine, somehow. You can get the worst and the best of them at a sitting. One can't do that with women. Most of us are forever purring and pawing and meowing one another when we know that what we want to do is to spit and claw. I like the easy ways of men—col-

THE SILENT BATTLE

lectively, Nellie, not individually, and I've come and gone among them because it seemed the most natural thing in the world to do. I've made a mistake. I know it now. When a girl gets to be 'a good fellow' she does it at the expense either of her femininity or her morals. And men make the distinction without difficulty. I'm 'a good fellow,'" she said scornfully, "and I'm decent. Men know it, but they know, too, that I have no individual appeal. Why only last week at the Breakfast the Sackett boy clapped me on the back and called me 'a jolly fine chap.' I put him down, I can tell you. I'd rather he'd called me anything—anything—even something dreadful—if it had only been feminine."

She flicked her cigarette into the fire and dropped into a chair.

Mrs. Pennington laughed.

"All this is very unmanly of you, Nina."

"Oh, I'm not joking. You're like the others. Just because I've ridden through life with a light hand, you think I'm in no danger of a cropper. Well, I am. I've had too light a hand, and I'm out in the back-stretch with a winded horse. *You* didn't make that mistake, Nellie. Why couldn't you have warned me?"

Mrs. Pennington held off the embroidery frame at arm's length and examined it with interest.

"You didn't ask me to, Nina," she replied quietly.

"No, I didn't. I never ask advice. When I do, it's only to do the other thing. But you might have offered it just the same."

"I might have, if I knew you wouldn't have followed it."

"No," reflectively. "I think I'd have done what you said. I like you immensely, you know, Nellie. You're a good sort—besides being everything I'm not."

DISCOVERED

"Meaning—what?"

"Oh, I don't know. You're all woman, for one thing."

"I have had two children," smiled the other toward the ceiling. "I could hardly be anything else."

"Is *that* it?" asked the visitor; and then after a pause, "I don't like children."

"Not other people's. You'd adore your own."

"I wonder."

Mrs. Pennington's pretty shoulders gave an expressive shrug.

"Marry, my dear. Nothing defines one's sex so accurately. Marry for love if you can, marry for money if you must, but marry just the same. You may be unhappy, but you'll never be bored."

Nina Jaffray gazed long into the fire.

"I've been thinking about it," she said. "That's what I came to see you about."

"Oh, Nina, I'm delighted!" cried Nellie Pennington genuinely, "and so flattered. Who, my dear child?"

"I've been thinking—seriously."

"You must have had dozens of offers."

"Oh, yes, from fortune hunters and gentlemen jockeys, but I'm not a philanthropic institution. Curiously enough my taste is quite conventional. I want a New Yorker—a man with a mind—with a future, perhaps, neither a prig nor a rake—human enough not to be too good, decent enough not to be burdensome—a man with weaknesses, if you like, a poor man, perhaps——"

"Nina. Who?"

Miss Jaffray paused.

"I thought I'd marry Phil Gallatin," she said quietly.

Mrs. Pennington laid her embroidery frame down and looked up quickly. Nina Jaffray's long legs were extended toward the blaze, but her head was lowered and her

THE SILENT BATTLE

eyes gazed steadily before her. It was easily to be seen that she was quite serious—more serious than Mrs. Pennington liked.

“Phil Gallatin! Oh, Nina, you can't mean it?”

“I do. There isn't a man in New York I'd rather marry than Phil.”

“Does he know it?”

“No. But I mean that he shall.”

“Don't be foolish. You two would end in the ditch in no time.”

Nina straightened and examined her hostess calmly.

“Do you think so?” she asked at last.

“Yes, I think so——” Nellie Pennington paused, and whatever it was that she had in mind to say remained unspoken. Instinct had already warned her that Nina was the kind of girl who is only encouraged by obstacles, and it was not her duty to impose them.

“Stranger things have happened, Nellie,” she laughed.

“But are you sure Phil will—er—accept you?”

“Oh, no, and I shan't be discouraged if he refuses,” she went on oblivious of Nellie Pennington's humor.

“Then you *do* mean to speak to him?”

“Of course.” Nina's eyes showed only grave surprise at the question. “How should he know it otherwise?”

“Your methods are nothing, if not direct.”

“Phil would never guess unless I told him. For a clever man he's singularly stupid about women. I think that's why I like him. Why shouldn't I tell him? What's the use of beating around the bush? It's such a waste of time and energy.”

Mrs. Pennington's laugh threw discretion to the winds.

“Oh, Nina, you'll be the death of me yet. There never was such a passion since the beginning of Time.”

DISCOVERED

“I didn’t say I *loved* Phil Gallatin,” corrected Nina promptly. “I said I’d decided to marry him.”

“And have you any reason to suppose that he shares your—er—nubile emotions?”

“None whatever. He has always been quite indifferent to me—to all women. I think the arrangement might be advantageous to him. He’s quite poor and I’ve got more money than I know what to do with. He’s not a fool, and I’m—Nellie, I’m not old-looking or ugly, am I? Why shouldn’t he like me, if he doesn’t like any one else?”

“No reason in the world, dear. *I’d* marry you, if *I* were a man.”

Mrs. Pennington took to cover uneasily, conscious that here was a situation over which she could have no control. She was not in Phil Gallatin’s confidence or in Jane Loring’s, and the only kind of discouragement she could offer must fail of effectiveness with a girl who all her life had done everything in the world that she wanted to do, and who had apparently decided that what she now wanted was Phil Gallatin. Nina’s plans would have been amusing had they not been rather pathetic, for Nellie Pennington had sought and found below her visitor’s calm exterior, a vein of seriousness, of regret and self-reproach, which was not to be diverted by the usual methods. Did she really care for Phil? Clever as Mrs. Pennington was, she could not answer that. But she knew that it was a part of Nina Jaffray’s methods to do the unexpected thing, so that her sincerity was therefore always open to question. Nellie Pennington took the benefit of that doubt.

“Has it occurred to you, Nina, that he may care for some one else?”

Her visitor turned quickly. “You don’t think so, do you?” she asked sharply.

“How should *I* know?” Mrs. Pennington evaded.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I've thought of that, Nellie. Who was Phil's wood-nymph? He's very secretive about it. I wonder why."

"I don't believe there *was* a wood-nymph," said Mrs. Pennington slowly. "Besides, Phil would hardly be in love with that sort of girl."

"That's just the point. What sort of a girl was she? What reason could Phil have for keeping the thing a secret? Was it an amourette? If it was, then it's Phil Gallatin's business and nobody else's. But if the girl was one of Phil's own class and station, like——"

"Miss Loring," announced the French maid softly from the doorway.

Nina Jaffray paused and an expression of annoyance crossed her face. She straightened slowly in her chair, then rose and walked across the room. Mrs. Pennington hoped that she would go, but she only took another cigarette and lit it carefully.

"You're too popular, Nellie," she said, taking a chair by the fire.

Mrs. Pennington raised a protesting hand.

"Don't say that, Nina. For years I've been dreading that adjective. When a woman finds herself popular with her own sex it means that she's either too *passée* to be dangerous, too staid to be interesting, or too stupid to be either. Morning, Jane! So glad! Is it chilly out or are those cheeks your impersonal expression of the joy of living?"

"Both, you lazy creature! How do you do, Nina? This is my dinner call, Mrs. Pennington. I simply couldn't wait to be formal."

"I'm glad, dear." And then mischievously, "Did you get home safely?"

"Oh, yes, but it was a pity to take *poor* Mr. Gallatin so far out of his way," she replied carelessly.

DISCOVERED

"Poor Phil! That's the fate of these stupid ineligible bachelors—to act as postilion to the chariot of Venus. Awfully nice boy, but so uninteresting at times."

"Is he? I thought him very attractive," said Jane. "He's one of *the* Gallatins, isn't he?"

"Yes, dear, the last of them. I was afraid you wouldn't like him."

"Oh, yes, I do. Quite a great deal. He's a friend of yours, isn't he, Nina?"

"I've known him for ages," said Miss Jaffray dryly; and then to Mrs. Pennington, "Why shouldn't Jane like him, Nellie?"

"Oh, I don't know," she finished with a gesture of graceful retirement. Their game of hide and seek was amusing, but hazardous in the present company, so she quickly turned the conversation into other channels.

Nina Jaffray and Jane Loring had met in the late autumn at a house party at the Ledyards' place in Virginia, and while their natures were hardly concordant, each had found in the other some ingredients which made for amiability. Jane's interest had been dictated by curiosity rather than approval, for Nina Jaffray was like no other girl she had ever met before. Whatever her manners, and these, Jane discovered, could be atrocious, her instincts were good, and her intentions seemed of the best. To Miss Jaffray, Jane Loring was 'a nice little thing' who had shown a disposition not to interfere with other people's plans, a nice little thing, amiable and a trifle prudish, for whom Nina's kind of men hadn't seemed to care. They had not been, and could never be intimate, but upon a basis of good fellowship, they existed with mutual toleration and regard.

Nellie Pennington, from her shadowed corner, watched the two girls with the keenest of interest and curiosity.

THE SILENT BATTLE

Nina Jaffray sat with hands clasped around one upraised knee, her head on one side listening carelessly to Jane's enthusiastic account of the Ledyards' ball, commenting only in monosyllables, but interested in spite of herself in Jane's ingenuous point of view, aware in her own heart of a slight sense of envy that she no longer possessed a susceptibility to those fresh impressions.

Nina was not pretty this morning, Nellie Pennington thought. Hers was the effectiveness of midnight which requires a spot-light and accessories and, unless in the hunting field, midday was unkind to her; while Jane who had danced late brought with her all the freshness of early blossoms. But she liked Nina, and that remarkable confession, however stagy and Nina-esque, had set her thinking about Jane Loring and Mr. Gallatin. It was a pretty triangle and promised interesting possibilities.

Jane was still speaking when Nina interrupted, as though through all that she had heard, one train of thought had persisted.

"What did you mean, Nellie, about Phil Gallatin being ineligible?" she asked. "And I *know* you don't think him stupid. And why shouldn't Jane Loring like him? I don't think I understand?"

Nellie Pennington smiled. She had made a mistake. Hide and seek as a game depends for its success upon the elimination of the bystander.

"I am afraid, of course, that Jane would be falling in love with him," she said lightly. And then, "That would have been a pity. Don't you think so, Nina?"

"There's hardly a danger of that," laughed Jane, "seeing that I've just—just been introduced to the man. You needn't be at all afraid, Nina."

"I'm not. Besides he's awfully gone on a wood-

DISCOVERED

nymph. You saw him blush when I spoke of it at dinner here—didn't you, Jane?"

"Yes, I did," said Jane, now quite rosy herself.

"Phil wouldn't have blushed you know," said Nina confidently, "unless he was terribly rattled. He *was* rattled. That's what I can't understand. Suppose he did find a girl who was lost in the woods. What of it? It's nobody's business but his own and the girl's. I'd be furious if people talked about me the way they're talking about Phil and that girl. I was lost once in the Adirondacks. You were, too, in Canada only last summer, Jane. You told me so down in Virginia and——"

Jane Loring had struggled hard to control her emotion, and bent her head forward to conceal her discomposure, but Nina's eyes caught the rising color which had flowed to the very tips of her ears.

"Jane!" cried Nina in sharp accents of amazed discovery. "It was you!"

The game of hide and seek had terminated disastrously for Jane, and her system of signals, useful to deceive as well as reveal had betrayed her. It was clearly to be seen that further dissimulation would be futile, so she raised her head slowly, the color gone from her cheeks.

"Yes, it was I," she said with admirable coolness. "Meeting Mr. Gallatin here the other night reminded me of it. That was one of the things I came to tell Mrs. Pennington this morning. But I don't suppose there's any reason why you shouldn't know it, too, Nina. If it hadn't been for Mr. Gallatin I know I should have *died*. You see, I had slipped and wrenched my ankle and, of course, couldn't move——"

"It must have been terrible!" put in Nellie Pennington in dire distress. "You poor child!"

"I haven't spoken of it," Jane went on hurriedly,

THE SILENT BATTLE

“because there wasn’t any reason why I should. But now, of course, that this story is going the rounds, it’s just as well that people knew. It wasn’t necessary to tell Mr. Gallatin my name up there, and until he met me in New York he did not know who I was. That, of course, is why the whole thing has seemed so mysterious.” She paused and smiled rather obtrusively at her companions. “It’s really a very trivial matter to make such a fuss about, isn’t it?”

“Absurd!” said Mrs. Pennington, with enthusiasm. “I wouldn’t worry about it in the least.”

“It *does* sound rather romantic, though,” laughed Jane uneasily, “but it wasn’t a bit. We nearly starved and *poor* Mr. Gallatin was almost dead with fatigue—when they found us.”

“Who found you?” asked Miss Jaffray.

“The guides, of course.”

“Oh!” said Nina.

Nellie Pennington put down her embroidery and rose. This wouldn’t do.

“Jane,” she said laughing. “You make me wild with envy. You’re a person to whom all sorts of interesting things are always happening. And now I hear you’re engaged to Coleman Van Duyn. Come, child, sit here and tell me all about it.”

“It’s not true. I’m very flattered, of course, but——”

“You’d better admit it. Nina won’t tell, will you, Nina?”

But Miss Jaffray had risen and was drawing on her gloves.

“Oh, no. I wouldn’t tell. Besides—you know I don’t believe it.” She glanced at the clock, and brushed a speck from her sleeve.

DISCOVERED

“ I think I’ll be going on,” she said. “ Good-by, Jane. Nellie, I’ll see you at the ‘ Pot and Kettle,’ won’t I? ” and went out of the room.

Mrs. Pennington followed her to the upper landing and when she had gone, returned thoughtfully to the room.

XVI

BEHIND THE ENEMY'S BACK

AS she turned and came into the room again, Jane Loring met her in the middle of the rug, seized her in her arms, kissed her rapturously on both cheeks, and confessed, though not without some hesitation, the object of her visit. Nellie Pennington led her to a divan near the window, and seated there holding one of her visitor's hands in both of hers, listened enchanted to the full tale of Jane's romance. Her delight was undisguised, for Nina Jaffray's rather frigid exit had already been forgotten by them both.

"Oh, Nellie, I'm so happy. I simply *had* to tell somebody. I wanted to come here yesterday, but I couldn't muster up the courage."

"And I'm not really 'odious'?" asked Mrs. Pennington.

"No, no," laughed Jane. "You're a sister to the angels. I hated him, Nellie, that night. I would have died rather than let him know I cared for him—and yet—I *did* let him know it——"

"Love and hate are first cousins. Love hates because it's afraid, Jane."

"Yes, that's true. I was afraid of myself—of him——"

"Not now?"

"No," proudly. "Not even of Fate itself. We'll face whatever is to come—together. I believe in him—utterly."

BEHIND THE ENEMY'S BACK

Nellie Pennington kissed her.

"So do I, Jane. I always have—and in you. I can't tell you how glad I am that you have told me all this. Flattered, too, child. I'm rather worldly wise, perhaps, even more so than your mother——"

"I haven't told mother," Jane put in with sudden demureness.

"Take my advice and do so immediately. Omit nothing. Your mother must put a stop to this story by telling the truth."

"Mother, you know, had hoped that I would marry Coleman Van Duyn. She doesn't approve of Phil, and father——" Jane paused as she remembered her father's estimate of Phil Gallatin— "and neither does my father," she finished thoughtfully.

"Oh, it will work out some way; such things do. But tell them at once."

"I think I had already decided that. But it isn't going to be easy. With me—with mother, my father is the soul of kindness, but with men——" She paused.

"Phil must take his chance."

"Yes, but father must respect him."

"Phil must earn his respect."

Jane was silent for a moment.

"My father has a sharp tongue at times," she went on. "He has mentioned Phil Gallatin's name—unpleasantly. I couldn't stand hearing him spoken about in that way. I couldn't listen. I couldn't tolerate it—even from my father. I have made a decision and father must abide by it. He must accept Phil as I have accepted him. I am satisfied. A man's past is his own. He can only give a girl his future. I used to think differently, but I'm content with that. Phil's future is mine, and I'll take my half of it, whatever it is."

THE SILENT BATTLE

At the mention of her father, Jane had risen and walked restlessly about, but as she finished speaking she turned and faced her companion squarely. Nellie Pennington rose and took her again in her arms.

"You'll do, Jane. I'm not afraid for you—for either of you. Let me help you. I want to. I don't think I could be happier if I were in love myself. He's worthy of you. I'm sure of it. Shall you marry him soon, dear?"

Jane colored adorably.

"No—not soon, I think. We have not spoken of that. Phil wants time—to prove—to show—everybody——"

She paused and Nellie Pennington breathed a sigh of relief. Her responsibilities had oppressed her.

"Let him, Jane," she urged quickly. "It's better so. You're very young. There's plenty of time. A year or two and then——"

"I'll marry him when he asks me to," Jane finished simply.

Nellie Pennington pressed her hands warmly, and they sat for a long time side by side while Jane told of all that had happened in the woods, including the sudden and unpleasant termination of her idyl. Nellie Pennington listened soberly, and learned more of the definiteness with which fate had placed the steps of these two young people upon the same pathway into the future. Love dwelt in Jane's eyes and confidence, a trust and belief in Phil Gallatin that put Nellie Pennington's rather assertive indorsement of him to the blush. She realized now that below Jane Loring's placid exterior, there was a depth of feeling, a quiet strength and resolution of which she had never even dreamed; for she, too, had thought Jane a "nice little thing"—a pretty, amiable, cheerful soul without prejudices, who would add much to her own joy of life, and to the intimate circle of young people she

BEHIND THE ENEMY'S BACK

chose to gather around her. Some of the girl's faith found its way into her own heart and she saw Phil now, as she had always hoped to see him, taking his place among the workers of the world, using the brains God had given him, and accomplishing the great things that she knew had always been within his power to accomplish.

When Jane rose to go, Mrs. Pennington detained her a moment longer.

"How well do you know Nina Jaffray?" she asked slowly.

"Oh, we've always got along admirably, because we've never interfered with each other, I think. But I don't understand her—nor does she me. Why do you ask?"

"Oh—I don't know——"

"I thought you liked her, Nellie."

"I do. I like everybody who doesn't bore me. Nina amuses me because she keeps me in a continual state of surprise. That's all very well so long as her surprises are pleasant ones; but when she wishes to be annoying, I assure you she can be amazingly disagreeable."

"I imagine so. But I don't think we'll have differences—at least I hope——"

"Don't be too intimate—that's all. Understand?"

They kissed; after which Jane departed, and on the way uptown found herself wondering from time to time whether Nellie Pennington could have meant something more than Jane thought she did. But in her state of exaltation nothing could long avail to divert her spirit from its joyous flight among the enchanted realms that had been discovered to her. That afternoon late, it was only going to be very late in the afternoon she now remembered, Phil Gallatin was to walk home with her from somebody's tea, to-morrow they were to dine at the Dorsey-Martin's, and late in the week there was the party at the

THE SILENT BATTLE

“Pot and Kettle.” After that—but what did it matter what happened after that? Each day, she knew, was to be more wonderful than the one that had gone before and it was not well to question the future too insistently. Sufficient unto the day was the good thereof, and Solomon indeed was not arrayed—inwardly at least—as Jane was.

Taking Mrs. Pennington’s advice, as soon as she reached home she sought her mother’s room. Mrs. Loring was reclining at full length on a portable wooden table which had been set up in the middle of her large apartment, and an osteopath was busy manipulating her small body. There wasn’t really anything the matter with her except social fag, but she chose this method of rehabilitating her tired nerves instead of active exercise which she abhorred. It was almost with a feeling of pity that Jane sat beside her mother when the practitioner had departed, for she knew that a scene would follow her confidences. And she was not mistaken; for when half an hour later, Jane went to her own room, her mother was in a state of collapse upon her bed, and Jane’s nerves were singing like taut wires, while on her mind were unpleasantly impressed the final words of maternal recrimination. But Jane knew that in spite of the violence of her mother’s opposition, she was very much less to be dreaded than her father, and that by to-morrow she would be reconciled to her daughter’s point of view and even might be reckoned upon as an ally. Nor would she speak to Mr. Loring without her daughter’s acquiescence. This Jane had no intention of giving, for she was sure that a meeting of her father and Phil, which must, of course, ensue at once, was not to be looked forward to with pleasurable expectation.

It was therefore in no very happy mood that Jane met Phil Gallatin late that afternoon at the Suydams’

BEHIND THE ENEMY'S BACK

tea whence he went home with her. She had said nothing of her interview with her mother, and was relieved to learn at the house that Mrs. Loring had gone out.

She led Phil back into the library and they sat before the open fire.

"What is it, Jane?" he asked. "Are you regretting——?"

"No," she smiled. "There isn't room in my heart for regret. It's full of—other things."

"I'm very dense. Can you prove it?"

"I'll try."

The davenport was huge, but only one end of it complained of their weight.

"Phil, are you *sure* there is no mistake?"

"Positive."

"And you never cared for any one else?"

"Never."

"Not Nina Jaffray?"

"No, why do you ask?"

"She once told me you had a boy-and-girl affair."

"Oh, that! She used to tease me and I would wash her face in the snow. That's Nina's idea of mutual affection."

"It isn't her idea now, is it?"

"I'm sure I don't know. You'll have to ask Larry Kane."

"And you don't ever think about her?"

"No—except with vague alarm for the safety of the species."

Jane laughed. "I don't want you to be unkind," she said, but was not displeased.

There was a silence in which Gallatin peered around the great room and his eyes smiled as they sought her face again.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"What are you thinking of?" she asked.

"Of this shelter—and another."

"Up among the pine trees? Oh, how white and cold it must be there now! It's ours though, Phil, so personal——"

"I'll build another—here in New York."

"Not like this?"

"No—hardly——" he smiled.

"I'm glad of that. This house oppresses me. It's so big—so silent and yet so noisy with the money that has been spent on it. I don't like money, Phil."

"That's because you've never felt the need of it. I'm glad you don't, though. You know I'm not very well off."

"I don't suppose Daddy would ever let me starve," she laughed.

His expression changed and he chose his words deliberately, his face turned toward the fire.

"It isn't my intention to place you in any such position," he said with curious precision. "I don't think you understand. It isn't possible for me to accept anything from your father, except yourself, Jane. I'll take you empty-handed as I first found you—or not at all."

"But even then you know it was *my* saucepan——"

But he shook his head. "It isn't a question of saucepans now."

"You're not fair, Phil," she murmured soberly. "Is it my fault that father has become what he is? Why shouldn't I help? I have something of my own—some stock in——"

He closed her lips with a kiss.

"I've got to have my own way. Can't you understand?" he whispered earnestly. "It's my sanity I'm fighting for—sanity of body and mind, and the medicines are toil—drudgery—responsibility. I've never known



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BEHIND THE ENEMY'S BACK

what work really meant. One doesn't learn that sort of thing in the crowd I've been brought up with. It's only the money a fellow makes himself that does him any good. I've seen other fellows raised as I was—losing their hold on life—slipping into the quagmire. I always thought I could pull up when I liked—when I got ready. But when I tried—I found I couldn't."

He paused and Jane pressed his hand in both of hers. But he went on decisively, "Desperate illnesses need desperate remedies, Jane. I learned that—up there with you. I've been ill, but I've found the cure and I'm taking it already. Downtown I've cut myself off from all financial support. I shan't have a dollar that I cannot make. I'm driven to the wall—and I'm going to fight."

He paused and then turned and looked into her eyes. "That's why it is that I want you to come to me empty-handed. I want to remember every hour of the day that on my efforts alone your happiness depends—*your* peace of mind, *your* future."

"Yes, I understand—but it might be made easier——"

"There isn't any easy way. And, whatever my other sins, I wouldn't climb to fortune on a woman's shoulders. I've nothing to offer you but my love——"

"It's enough."

"No, I came into your life a pauper—a derelict—an idler—a dr——"

"Don't, Phil," she whispered, her fingers on his lips.

"I shall come to you sane and whole or I shall not come to you. I ask nothing of you. You must make me no promises."

"I don't see how you can prevent that," she smiled.

"I shall make them anyway."

"No, you're not promised to me."

"I am."

"No."

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I don't see how you can prevent my promising. I promise to love, honor and obey——"

"Then obey at once and stop promising."

"I won't——"

"Then what validity has a promise, broken the moment it's made?" His logic was inevitable.

"Cherish, then," she evaded.

He held her away from him, looked into her eyes and laughed. "If it establishes no precedent—er—you may cherish me at once."

"What does cherish mean?"

He showed her.

"I'm afraid the precedent is already established, Phil," she sighed. She sank back in his arms and he kissed her tenderly.

"I can't stop seeing you, Jane," he whispered at her ear. "You renew me, give me new faith in myself, new hope for the future. I know that I oughtn't to have the right, but I can't give you up. I need you. When I'm with you, I wonder how there could ever be any sin in the world. Your eyes are so clear, dear, like the pool—*our* pool in the woods and my image in them is as clear as they are. Whatever I've said I don't want that image to go out of them. Keep it there, Jane, no matter what happens, and believe in me."

"I will," she whispered, "whatever happens."

"I'll come for you some day, dear,—soon perhaps. I'm working on a big case, one that involves large issues. All of me that isn't yours, I'm giving to that—and that's yours, too."

"You'll win, Phil."

"Yes, I'll win. I must win," he finished. "I *must*."

"Oh, Phil, dear," she murmured. "It doesn't matter. What should I care whether you win or lose? Whatever

BEHIND THE ENEMY'S BACK

you have been, whatever you are or hope to be, you've kissed me and I'm yours—until the end. What does it matter what I promise—or what I fail to promise? I'll wait for you because you wish it, but I would tell the world to-morrow if you'd let me."

"No," he said quickly. "Not yet. I want to look my Enemy in the eyes, Jane, for—for a long while. I'll stare him down until he slinks away—not into the shadows behind me—but away—far off—so far that he shall not find me again—or I him—ever."

"Is the Enemy here—now?" she questioned anxiously.

"No," he smiled. "Not here. I drove away from him in an enchanted brougham."

Jane straightened and looked into the fire.

"Phil."

"Yes."

"I've told Nellie Pennington and—and mother."

He folded his arms and gazed steadily into the fire.

"What did they say?"

"Nellie Pennington was pleased; mother was not," she said frankly.

"I'm sorry to hear that. But I could hardly have expected——"

"It doesn't matter," she went on hastily. "I thought you ought to know."

"I shall see Mr. Loring," he said, his brows tangling.

"Is it necessary—at once?"

"I think so. There mustn't be any false positions. I hope I can make him understand. Obviously I can't visit the house of a man who doesn't want me there."

Jane couldn't reply at once. And when she did her face was as serious as his own.

"Won't you leave that to me, Phil?" she said gently.

XVII

“THE POT AND KETTLE”

THE “Pot and Kettle” was up in the hills near Tuxedo, within motoring distance of the city and near enough to a station to be convenient to those who were forced to depend upon the railroad. It was a gabled farmhouse of an early period converted by the young men of Colonel Broadhurst’s generation into its latter-day uses as a club for dilettante cooks, where the elect might come in small parties on snowy winter nights, or balmy summer ones, and concoct with their own hands the glasses and dishes most to their liking. Its membership was limited and its fellows clannish. Most of the younger members of the Club had been proposed on the day of their birth, and accession at the age of twenty-one to its rights and privileges had always been the signal for a celebration with an intent both gastronomic and bibulous. On club nights every one contributed his share to the evening’s entertainment, and the right to mix cocktails, make the salad dressing, or grill the bird was transmitted by solemn act in writing from those of the older generation to those of the new, who could not be dispossessed of their respective offices without a proper delegation of authority or the unanimous vote of those present.

A member of the “Pot and Kettle” had the privilege of giving private entertainments to a select few, provided due notice was given in advance, and upon that occasion the Club was his own and all other members were warned to keep off the premises. This gave the “Pot and Kettle”

“THE POT AND KETTLE”

affairs a privacy like that which the member enjoyed in his own home, for it was the unwritten law of the Club that whatever passed within its doors was not to be spoken of elsewhere.

Egerton Savage had long ago discovered that no preparation was necessary to make entertainments successful at the “Pot and Kettle.” The number of a party given, to the steward and his wife, all a host had to do was to put on his white apron and await the arrival of his guests. But to give an added zest to this occasion the fortunate ones had been advised that the party was “for children only.”

And as children they came. Ogden Spencer, Larry Kane and Coley Van Duyn in a motor direct from the Cosmos Club arrived first and hurried upstairs with their packages from the costumers to dress; the Perrines and Betty Tremaine followed; then Mrs. Pennington, the chaperon, and a limousine full of *débutantes*; Jane Loring with Honora Ledyard and Bibby Worthington; and Dirwell De Lancey with Clifford Benson, and Freddy Sackett. Nina Jaffray had driven out alone. Most of the girls had dressed at home and arrived ready for the fray, and after a few finishing touches in the ladies' dressing-room upstairs were ready to greet their host, at the foot of the stairs. Egerton Savage, his thin legs emerging from velvet knee breeches, as *Little Boy Blue*, met *Little Miss Muffett*, *Old King Cole*, *Old Mother Hubbard*, *Peter Piper*, *Margery Daw*, *Bobby Shafto*, *Jack Spratt*, *Solomon Grundy*, and all of the rest of the nursery crew. Nellie Pennington's *débutantes* scattered about the building like a pack of inquisitive terriers, investigating every nook and cranny, peering into cupboards and closets and punctuating the clatter of arrival with pleasant little yelps of delight.

THE SILENT BATTLE

As they all assembled at last in the kitchen, large white aprons, which covered their costumes from neck to foot, were handed out and the real business of the evening was begun. Egerton Savage, chief-cook and arbiter, with a shrewd knowledge of the capabilities of débutantes, handed each of the young ladies a loaf of bread and a long toasting fork, their mission being to provide the toast, as well as the toasts of the night; and presently an odor of scorching bread pervaded the place.

Jane rebelled.

"I simply *won't* be subjected to such an indignity, Mr. Savage," she laughed. "I can cook—really I can."

He eyed her askant and laughed.

"You must be *Mistress Mary, Quite Contrary*, aren't you?"

"I am, and I *won't* cook toast."

At last he commissioned her to poach the eggs.

Larry Kane, a club member, as the *Infant Bacchus*, in fleshings and cheesecloth with a garland of grape-leaves on his head, had already begun the concoction known as the "Pot and Kettle punch," an amber-colored fluid with a fragrant odor of spices, and a taste that was mildness itself, but in which there lurked the potent spell of the wassail of many lands. It was against this punch that Nellie Pennington had taken pains on the way out in the machine, to warn her small brood; and some of those young ladies who had already retired from the fire, stood beside the mixer of ingredients, sniffing at the uncorked bottles, making pretty faces and lisping in childish disapproval.

Coleman Van Duyn, as *Little Jack Horner*, his scarlet face rising like a winter sunset from his white apron, was superintending the broiling of the lobsters; Dirwell De Lancey, who proclaimed himself *Simple Simon*, was

“THE POT AND KETTLE”

carving cold turkey, Freddy Sackett was making the salad-dressing; while Betty Tremaine, a very comely *Bo-Peep*, was drying the lettuce leaves and crushing them to the proper consistency between her slender pink fingers; Yates Rowland stewed the terrapin; Percy Endicott made the coffee; and Sam Purviance, with Nina Jaffray's help, made the cocktails.

The festivities of supper were well under way before Phil Gallatin arrived. It had been late before he could leave the office, and so he had been obliged to come out by train. After getting into costume he sought the room eagerly for Jane and their eyes met in wireless telegraphy, across the table. The chairs beside her were occupied by Worthington and Van Duyn, so he dropped into a chair Savage offered him between Mrs. Pennington and Miss Tremaine. His host thrust a cocktail in front of him on the table, and Phil thanked him over his shoulder, but when Savage had gone, he pushed it away. Nellie Pennington realized that he looked a little tired and serious, but made no comment. Gallatin had been working hard all day and until the present moment had forgotten that he had had no lunch. Food revived him and it was not long before he could enter into the gay spirit of the company. They were children, indeed. The cooking finished, their white aprons had been discarded and loud was the joy at the appearance of the men and eager the compliments for the ladies. The babel of baby rattles and tin whistles, discontinued for a time, arose again and the table rang from end to end with joke and laughter. Bibby Worthington's wig of *Bobby Shafto* got askew and at an unfortunate moment was jostled off into the salad-bowl, upon which his bald head received baptism in fizz at the hands of the *Infant Bacchus*. Freddy Perrine, who had had more than his share of punch, was shooting

THE SILENT BATTLE

butter-balls from the prongs of a fork at Kent Beylard's white shirt-front, for Beylard hadn't had time to go to the costumer. Dirwell De Lancey insisted upon singing "The Low-Backed Car," but was prevented from doing so by the vehemence of his chorus which advised him to get a limousine. Sam Purviance began telling a story which seemed to be leading toward Montmartre when Nellie Pennington rose from the table, and followed by her buds, adjourned to another room. Here the sound of a piano was immediately heard and the tireless feet of the younger set took up the Turkey Trot where they had left off at three o'clock the night before.

No word had passed between Phil Gallatin and Jane, and he had just gotten to his feet in pursuit of her when Nina Jaffray stood in his way.

"Hello, Phil," she said. "I've been wanting to see you."

"Me? I'm glad of that, Nina. You're certainly a corker in that get-up. What are you?"

"I'm *Jill*. Won't you help me fetch a pail of water?"

"And have my crown broken? No, thanks. Besides I couldn't. It wouldn't be in the part. You see I'm——

'Tommy Trot, the man of law,
Who sold his bed to lay on straw.'"

"Are you? It isn't true, is it, Phil? I heard you were going out of the firm."

"Oh, no. I've been working, Nina. Sounds queer, doesn't it? Fact, though."

"There's something I want to see you about, Phil. I've been on the point of looking you up at the office."

"You! What is it?" he laughed. "Breach of promise or alienation of the affections?"

"Neither," slowly. "Seriously—there's something I

"THE POT AND KETTLE"

want to say to you." Gallatin looked at her and she met his eye fairly. "I'd like to talk to you here—now—if you don't mind."

"Oh—er—of course. But if it's anything of a serious nature—perhaps——"

"I can speak here—will you follow me?"

Gallatin glanced over his shoulder in the direction of the room into which Jane had disappeared, but there was nothing left but to follow, so he helped the girl find a quiet spot on the back stairway where Nina settled herself and motioned to him to a place at her feet. Gallatin sat trying to conceal his impatience in the smoke of a cigarette, and wondering how soon Nina would let him go to Jane.

"Phil, you and I have known each other a good many years. We've always got along pretty well, haven't we?"

"Of course," he nodded.

"You've never cared much for girls and I've never thought much about men—sentimentally I mean—but we always understood each other and—well—we're pretty good friends, aren't we?"

"I'd be very sorry if I thought anything else," he said politely.

She paused and examined his profile steadily.

"You know, Phil, I'm interested in you. I think I've always been interested—but I never told you so because—because it seemed unnecessary. I thought if you ever needed my friendship you'd come and ask me for it."

"I would—I mean, I do," he stammered.

"Something has been bothering me," she went on slowly. "The other morning at Nellie Pennington's, Jane Loring told us the truth about the Dryad story."

"Yes."

"And, of course, even though friendship doesn't give

THE SILENT BATTLE

me the privilege of your confidence unless you offer it voluntarily, I thought you might be willing to tell me something——”

“What, Nina?”

“You’re not in love with—you’re not going to marry Jane Loring, are you?”

Gallatin smiled.

“I’m hardly the sort of person any girl could afford to marry,” he said slowly.

“Does Jane Loring think so?” she persisted.

“She has every reason to think so,” he muttered.

“You’re not engaged?” she protested quickly.

“No,” he said promptly.

She gave a sigh of relief.

“Oh—that’s all I wanted to know.”

Something unfamiliar in the tones of her voice caused him to look at his companion.

“What did you want to know for, Nina?” he questioned.

“Because if you *were* engaged—if you really were in love with Jane, I wouldn’t care—I wouldn’t have the right to speak to you in confidence.” She hesitated, looking straight at the bare wall before her, but she smiled her devil-may-care smile and went on with a touch of her old manner. “I doubt if you really know me very well after all. I don’t think anybody does. I’ve got a name for playing the game wide open and riding roughshod over all the dearest conventions of the dodos. But I’m straight as a string, Phil, and there isn’t a man or woman in the Cedarcroft or out that can deny it.”

Gallatin smiled.

“It wouldn’t be healthy for anybody to deny it.”

“I don’t care much whether they deny it or not. People who don’t like my creed are welcome to their own.

"THE POT AND KETTLE"

I won't bother them and they needn't bother me. But I do care for my friends—and I'm true. You know that, don't you?"

"Of course."

"And I'm not all hoyden, Phil."

"Who said you were?"

"Nobody—but people think it."

"I don't."

"I was hoping you'd say that. Inside of me I think I'm quite womanly at times——"

He smiled and looked at her curiously.

"But I'm tired of riding through life on a loose snaffle. I want to settle down and have a place of my own and—and all that."

"I hadn't an idea. Is that what you wanted to tell me? Who is it, Nina?"

"I'm not in love, you know, Phil," she went on. "I've watched the married couples in our set—those who made love matches—or thought they did, those who married for money or convenience, and those who—well—who just married. There's not a great deal of difference in the result. One kind of marriage is just about as successful or as unsuccessful as another. It's time I married and I've tried to think the thing out in my own way. I've about decided that the successful marriage is entirely a matter of good management—a thing to be carefully planned from the very beginning."

Gallatin listened with dull ears. The girl beside him was talking heresies. Happiness wasn't to be built on such a scientific formula. Love was born in Arcadia. He knew. And Jane——

"You know, Phil," he heard Nina Jaffray saying again, "I'm in the habit of speaking plainly, you may not like my frankness, but you can be pretty sure that

THE SILENT BATTLE

I mean what I say. I've made up my mind to marry and I wanted you to know about it so that you could think it over."

"Me! Nina!" Gallatin started forward suddenly aware of the personal note in her remarks. "You don't mean that I——"

"I thought that you might like to marry me," she repeated coolly.

"You can't mean it," he gasped. "That you—that I——"

"I mean nothing else. I'd like to marry you, Phil." Gallatin laughed.

"Really, Nina, I was almost on the point of taking you seriously. You and I—married! Wouldn't we have a lark, though?"

"I'm quite serious," she insisted. "I'd like to marry you, if you haven't any other plans."

"Plans!" He searched her eyes again. "Why, Nina, you silly child, you've never even—even flirted with me, at least, not for years."

"That's true. I couldn't somehow. I couldn't flirt with anybody I cared for."

"Then you do—*care* for—me?" he muttered in bewilderment.

"Don't mistake me, Phil," she put in. "I care for you, yes, but I'm not in the least sentimental. I abhor sentimentality. You're simply the nearest approach I have found to my idea of masculine completeness. You're not an ideal person by any means. Your vices are quite brutal, but they don't terrify me—and you're pretty well endowed with compensating virtues. It's about time you gathered in your loose reins and took to the turnpike. I'd like to help you and I think I could."

"THE POT AND KETTLE"

"I—I haven't any doubt of it," he stammered.
"Only——"

"What?"

"I'm not a marrying man, that's all," he blundered on, still struggling with incomprehension.

She remained silent a moment.

"You say that, because you believe you oughtn't to marry, don't you, Phil?"

"I say it because I'm not going to marry—until I know just where I stand—just what I'm worth in a long game. Single, I haven't hurt anybody but myself, but I'm not going to let any woman——"

He stopped suddenly. And then with an abrupt gesture rose.

"I can't talk of this, Nina," he said quickly. "You must see it's—it's impossible. You're not in love with me—or likely to be——"

"Oh, I'm in no hurry. I might learn," she said calmly.

There was no refuge from her quiet insistence but in laughter, and so, brutally, he took it.

"Really, Nina, if I hadn't known you all my life, I could almost believe you serious."

"Don't laugh! I am," she said immovably.

And now that it seemed to Gallatin there remained no doubt that she meant it, he sat down again beside her and took her hand in his, his face set in serious lines. He liked Nina, but like many other persons had always weighed her lightly. Even now he felt sure that, by tomorrow, she would probably have forgotten the entire conversation. But the situation was one that required a complete understanding.

"If I can believe you, you've succeeded in flattering

THE SILENT BATTLE

me a great deal, I've always been used to expect amazing things of you, but I can't say I'm quite prepared for the extraordinary point of view on married life which you ask me to share. I've always had another idea of marriage, the same one that you have deep down in your heart, for without it you wouldn't be a woman. You'll marry the man you love and no other."

"And if the man I love won't marry *me*?"

"It will be time to settle that when you meet him."

"I've already met him."

Gallatin searched her eyes for the truth and was again surprised when he found it in them. Her gaze fell before his and she turned her head away, as though the look he had seen in her eyes had shamed her.

"It isn't true, Nina. It can't be——"

"Yes," she murmured. "It's quite true. I think I've pitied you a little, but I'm quite sure that I—I've cared for you always."

There was a silence and then she heard,

"God knows, I'm sorry."

There was a note of finality in his tone which affected her strangely. It was not until then that she guessed the truth.

"You—you care for Jane Loring?"

"Yes," he said almost inaudibly. "I do."

He owed her that frankness.

"Thanks," she said quietly. "It's strange I shouldn't have guessed. I—I didn't think you cared for any one. You never have, you know. And it never entered my head that you could be really interested in—in a girl like Jane. Even when I learned that you had been together in the woods, I couldn't believe—I don't think I quite believe it yet. She's hardly your style——"

She stopped and he remained silent, his head averted.

"THE POT AND KETTLE"

"Funny, isn't it?" she went on. "Larry Kane wants to marry me, I want to marry you, and you want to marry Jane. Now if Jane would only fall in love with Larry!"

She laughed and drew away from him, for over his head she saw the figures of Jane Loring and Coleman Van Duyn who had just entered the kitchen. Jane had glanced just once in their direction and then had turned aside. Nina glanced at Phil. He was unconscious of the presence of the others—it almost seemed, unconscious of herself.

All the mischief in her bubbled suddenly to the surface. Jane Loring at least should see——

"I'm sorry, Phil," she murmured. "I think I'll survive. We can still be friends. I want one favor of you, though."

He questioned.

"Kiss me, will you, Phil?" she whispered.

And Gallatin did; to turn in a moment and see Jane Loring's skirts go fluttering past the dining-room door, through which, grinning broadly over his shoulder, Coleman Van Duyn quickly followed her.

XVIII

THE ENEMY AND A FRIEND

IT was a moment before Gallatin realized the full significance of the incident, but when he turned to look at Nina, he found her leaning against the wall convulsed with silent laughter.

"You knew, Nina?" he said struggling for his self-control. "You saw them—there?"

"Oh, yes, I saw them," she replied easily. "I couldn't help it very well."

"You asked me to—to kiss you!" he stammered, his color rising.

"Yes, I did. You never *had* kissed me before, you know, Phil."

"You—you wanted her to see," he asserted.

"I didn't mind her seeing—if that's what you mean."

"You had no right——"

She held up her hand with a mock gesture of command.

"Don't speak! You'll say something you'll regret. It's not often I ask a man to kiss me, and when I do I expect a display of softer emotions. But anger—dismay! I'm surprised at you. You're really quite too rustic, or is it rusty? Besides, you know, I've done you the greatest of favors."

"Favors!" he exclaimed.

"Precisely. In addition to accepting your—er— fraternal benediction, I've succeeded in creating a diversion in the ranks of the dear enemy. Jealousy is the vinegar of the salad of love, Phil. Jane is quite sure to love you madly now."

THE ENEMY AND A FRIEND

"Come," he said briefly, "let's get out of this."

"You mustn't use that tone to me. It's extremely annoying."

"You're mischievous," he growled.

"Am I?" with derisive sweetness. "I hadn't meant to be. Perhaps my infatuation has blinded me. I'm really very badly in love with you, Phil. And you must see that it's extremely unpleasant for me to discover that you're in love with somebody else. You know I can't yield placidly. I'm not the placid kind. I may be in advance of my generation, but I'm sure if I had my way I'd abduct you to-night in the motor and fly to Hoboken."

Gallatin laughed. He couldn't help it. She was too absurd. And her mocking effrontery made it difficult for him to remember that a moment ago he had thought her serious.

"Fortunately, I am capable of moderating my emotions," she went on. "My heart may be beating wildly, but behold me quietly submissive to your decision. All I ask is that you won't offer to be a brother to me, Phil. I really couldn't stand for that."

"Nina, you're the limit."

"I know I am—I'm excited. It's the outward and visible expression of inward and spiritual dissolution. What would you advise, Paris green or a leap from the Metropolitan Tower? One exit is plebeian, the other squashy; or had I better blow out the gas? Will you see that my headlines are not too sentimental? Not, 'She Died for Love'; something like 'Scorned—Social Success Suicides' or 'Her Last Cropper,' are more in my line. Sorrowfully alliterative, if you like, but chastely simple. Aren't you sorry for me, Phil?"

"Hardly. As the presentment of disappointed affection you're not a success. Your martyrdom has all the

THE SILENT BATTLE

aspects of a frolic at my expense. Don't you think you've made a fool of me long enough?"

"Yes, I think so. I *have* made a fool of you, haven't I? I'm sorry. I didn't intend to until I found that you had made a fool of me. I wanted company."

Her humor changed as he turned away from her and she restrained him with a hand on his arm, her eyes seeking his.

"You're my sort, Phil, not hers," she whispered earnestly. "You're a vagabond—a vagrant on life's highway, as I am—a failure, as I am, only a worse one. You've tried to stem the tide against you, but you couldn't. What have you to do with Jane Loring's bourgeois respectability? Do you think you'll be immune because of her? Do you think that she can cleanse you of the blood of your fathers and make you over on her own prim pattern? You're run in a different mold. What Jane Loring wants is a stupid respectable Dodo, an impoverished patriarch with an exclusive visiting list. Let her buy one in the open market. The clubs are full of them." She laughed aloud. "What does Jane Loring know of you? What chance have you——?"

"I think I've heard enough, Nina," said Gallatin. He walked to the dining-room and stood, waiting for her to pass before him. She paused, shrugged her shoulders carelessly and, as she passed through the door, she leaned toward him and whispered.

"You'll never marry her, Phil. Do you hear? Never!"

Gallatin inclined his head slightly and followed.

The dance was in full swing, and outside in the enclosed veranda a game of "Pussy Wants a Corner" had come to an end because Sam Purviance insisted upon standing in the middle of the floor and reciting tearfully the

THE ENEMY AND A FRIEND

le of "Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog." Then they ried charades which failed because the actors insisted on isappearing into the wings and couldn't be made to appear, and because the audience found personal problems ore interesting. A game of "Follow My Leader," led y Larry Kane upstairs and down, developed such amazing feats of gymnastics that Nellie Pennington rebelled.

Phil Gallatin followed Jane with his eyes, but she re-used even to glance in his direction and he was very unappy. There seemed no chance of getting a word with er, for when at the end of the dance he approached her, he snubbed him very prettily and went out with Van Duyn to sit among the palms at the end of the veranda. Gallatin felt very much like the fool Nina had said he was and wandered around from group to group joining half-heartedly in their conversations, his uneasiness apparent to any who chose to perceive. Several times Nina raffray passed him smiling wickedly, and once she stopped and whispered.

"Hadn't you better go home in my car, Phil? I don't believe there will be room for you in Jane's."

He laughed with an air of unconcern he was very far from feeling.

"Thanks, I'm afraid you'd take me to Hoboken."

She went on to the dance and Gallatin watched her until she disappeared. He was alone in the dining-room. Through the door by which she had gone came the sound of the piano and the chatter of gay voices. Through the other door he could see a jovial group of his familiars sitting around a table in the center of which was a tall bottle bearing a familiar label, his Enemy enthroned as usual in this company. He was like a vessel in the chop of two tides, one of which would bring him to a safe port and the other to sea.

THE SILENT BATTLE

He looked away, hesitated, then walked hastily to the Colonial sideboard where he drew a cup of hot coffee and drank it quickly. Then he followed Nina into the dancing-room.

He waited impatiently until the dance was finished, and then, when Jane Loring was left for a moment alone, with more valor than discretion, went up to her.

"Jane," he whispered, "you've got to give me a moment alone."

She turned away, but he stood in front of her again.

"It's all a mistake, if you'll let me explain——"

"Let me pass, please."

"No, not until you promise to listen to me—to-night. I'll go in your machine, and then——"

"I'm sorry. There's no room for you, Mr. Gallatin."

"I must see you to-night."

"No—not to-night," and in lowered tones, "or any other night."

"Jane, I——"

"Let me pass, please."

The music began again and Percy Endicott at this moment came up, claiming her for a partner. Before Gallatin could speak again, Jane was in Endicott's arms, and laughing gayly, was sweeping around the room to the measure of a two-step. Gallatin stared at her as though he had not been able to believe his own ears. He waited a moment and then slowly walked back toward the kitchen.

His appearance in the doorway was the signal for a shout from Egerton Savage who held a glass aloft and offered his health. His health! He swayed forward heavily. What did it matter? His blood surged. What would it matter—just once? Just once!

He lunged forward into the chair somebody pushed

THE ENEMY AND A FRIEND

toward him, took up the glass of champagne his host had poured for him, drained it, his eyes closed, and put it down on the table.

Just once! It was a beautiful wine—sent out for the occasion from Mr. Savage's own collection in town, and it raced through Gallatin's veins like quicksilver, tingling to his very finger ends. He looked up and laughed. Something had bothered him a moment ago. What was it? He had forgotten. Life was a riot of color and delight and here were his friends—his men friends—who were always glad to see a fellow, no matter what. It was good to have that kind of friends.

Somebody told a story. Gallatin had not heard the beginning of it, but he realized that he was laughing uproariously, more loudly than any one else at the table. The lights swam in a mist of tobacco smoke and the figures of the men around him were blurred. Egerton Savage had filled his glass again, and Gallatin was in the very act of reaching forward to take it when Bibby Worthington, who sat alongside, rose suddenly as though to get a match from the holder, and the sleeve of his laced coat somewhat obtrusively swept Gallatin's glass off the table to the stone flagging.

"Beg pardon," he said cheerfully. "There's many a lip 'twixt the nip and the pip. Sorry, Phil."

The crash of glass had startled Gallatin, who looked up into Worthington's face for a possible meaning of the incident, for it was the clumsiest accident that could befall a sober man. But Bibby, his lighted match suspended in mid-air, returned his gaze with one quite calm and unwavering. Gallatin understood, and a dark flush rose under his skin. He was about to speak when Bibby broke in.

"Phil, I'm probably the most awkward person in the

THE SILENT BATTLE

world," he said evenly. "The only thing about me that's ever in the right place is my heart. Understand?"

If Gallatin had thought of replying, the words were unuttered, for he lowered his head and only muttered a word or two which could not be heard.

Bibby blew the strands of his tousled wig from his eyes and carefully brushed the liquor from his sleeve with his lace handkerchief.

"Sad thing, that," he said gravely, "vintage, too."

"Lucky there's more of it," said Savage, taking up the bottle. "Hand me one of those glasses on the side table there, Bibby."

Worthington turned slowly away, looked down at Gallatin and a glance passed between the two men. As Bibby moved off Gallatin took out his case and hastily lit a cigarette.

"Never mind, Bibby," he found himself saying. "No, thanks, Egerton, I'm—er—on the wagon." He lit his cigarette, rose, opened the door, and looked out into the winter night, drinking in deep draughts of the keen air. His evil moment had passed.

"Howling success, this party, Egerton," somebody was saying. "Listen to those infants on the veranda."

"Hello," cried Bibby. "It's *Bobby Shafto*, by George. I'll have to go in and make my bow. Come along, Phil. They'll be calling for you presently. What the devil *are* you anyway?"

Phil Gallatin took his arm and walked out on the terrace.

"I—I'm a d—— fool, Bibby, pretty poorly masked," he muttered heavily.

"You are, my boy. But it takes a wise man to admit he is a fool. Glad you know it. Awfully glad. Not sore, are you?"

THE ENEMY AND A FRIEND

"No," said Gallatin slowly. "Not in the least."

"Nothing like the crash of glass—to awake a fellow. Feel all right?"

"Yes, I—I think so."

"I had a lot of nerve to do a thing like that, Phil, but you see——"

"I'm glad you did. I—I won't forget it, Bibby."

The two men clasped hands in the darkness in a new bond of friendship.

They entered the house from another door and passed through the closed veranda. Upon the floor of the living room, in a large circle facing the center, the infants sat, tailor fashion, singing lustily, and greeted *Bobby Shafto's* appearance with shouts of glee. They made him get into their midst and dance, which he did with all the grace of a jackdaw, while Betty Tremaine played the accompaniment on the piano.

Bobby Shafto's gone to sea
Silver buckles on his knee
He'll come back and marry me
Darling Bobby Shafto.

"But *who* is he going to marry?" maliciously chortled one of the débutantes, in the ensuing pause.

"*You*, my angel, if you'll have me?" and leaning over he quickly kissed her.

There was a laugh at the girl's expense and Bibby retired in triumph.

One by one the characters were summoned and noisily greeted: *Old King Cole*, who was Yates Rowland; *Old Mother Hubbard*, who was Percy Endicott ("Aptly taken, by Jove!" was Spencer's comment) and *Simple Simon*, who was Dirwell De Lancey (and looked the part). But the hit of the occasion was the dance which followed

THE SILENT BATTLE

between *Jill* and the *Infant Bacchus*. It was clear that no nursery music would be suitable here. So Betty Tremaine's fingers hurried into the *presto* of Anitra's Dance from the "Peer Gynt" music, which caught the requirements of the occasion. The dancers were well-matched and the audience upon the floor, which had at first begun to clap its hands to the gay lilt, slowly drew back to give more room, and then finding itself in danger from the flying heels dispersed and looked on from adjacent doorways. The dance was everything and it was nothing—redowa, tarantella, cosaque, fandango, and only ended when the dancers and pianist were exhausted.

The party broke up amidst wild applause and led by Mrs. Pennington the guests were already on their way to the dressing-rooms, when Nina Jaffray, still breathless from her exertions stepped before Gallatin and whispered amusedly:

"It almost seems as if you *might* go with me after all, doesn't it, Phil?" she laughed. "It's too late for a train and all the machines but mine are crowded——"

"You're very kind, but I think I'll walk. It's only twenty miles."

"Don't be disagreeable, Phil. Larry Kane wanted to go with me, but I've sent him along with Ogden Spencer—just because I wanted to apologize to you."

"Apology!" he laughed. "Why dwell on that? Besides you're a little too prompt to be quite sincere."

"Haven't you any sense of humor, Phil?"

"No."

"What a situation! *You* kiss me and *I* apologize for it! Laugh, Phil, laugh! Mrs. Grundy is shrieking with delight. O boy! What a silly thing you look!"

"Good night, Nina."

"No, au revoir," she corrected. "You know, Phil,

THE ENEMY AND A FRIEND

you mustn't insult me—not publicly, that is. You see you couldn't force yourself into somebody else's machine, when I'm going home alone in an empty one. Besides, it's all arranged with Egerton."

Gallatin smiled and shrugged. "Oh, of course," he said, "you seem to have me at your mercy."

"I'll be very good though, Phil," she said, moving toward the stairway, "and if you're afraid of me, I'll ask Egerton to be chaperon." She laughed at him over her shoulder, and he had to confess that this was the humor which suited her best.

Gallatin went slowly toward his dressing-room, his lips compressed, his head bent, a prey to a terrible depression made up of fervid self-condemnation. He had been on the very verge of—that which he most dreaded. In his heart, too, was a dull resentment at Jane's intolerance—an attitude he was forced to admit when he could think more clearly that he had now amply justified, not because Jane had been a witness of the incident upon the kitchen stairway, but because of the other thing. Slowly he began to realize that to a woman a kiss is a kiss, whether coolly implanted near the left ear, as his had been, or upon a more appropriate spot; and the distinction which, at the time of the occurrence, had been so clear to his mind, seemed now to be less impressive. Jane's position was unreasonable, but quite tenable, and he now discovered that unless he threw Nina's confidences into the breach, a defense hardly possible under the circumstances, the matter would be difficult to explain. And yet the act had been so harmless, his intention so innocent, that, weighed in the balance with his love for Jane, the incident seemed to him the merest triviality, with reference to which Jane should not have condemned him unheard. He heard her laugh as she went down the

THE SILENT BATTLE

stairs, and the carelessness of that mirth cut him to the marrow. What right had she to be gay when she knew that he must be suffering?

He entered Nina's limousine, very much sobered, with a wish somewhere hidden in his heart that for this night at least Nina had been in Jericho. If the lady in the machine divined his thought she gave not the least sign of it; for when they had left the Club, some time after the others, and were on their way to the city, she carelessly resumed.

"I didn't ask Egerton to come, Phil. You're not really alarmed, are you?"

"Not in the least," he smiled. "In fact, I was hoping we'd be alone."

"Phil, you're improving. Why?"

"So that we may continue our interesting conversation at the point where we left off."

"Where did we leave off? Oh, yes, you kissed me, didn't you? Shall we begin there?"

"I suppose that's what you asked me here for, isn't it?" he said brutally.

"Oh, Phil, you don't believe—that!"

She deserved this punishment, she knew, but the carelessness of his tone shocked her and she moved away into her corner of the vehicle and sat rigidly as though turned to stone, her eyes gazing steadily before her at the white circle of light beyond the formless back of the chauffeur. In the reflected light Gallatin saw her face and the jest that was on his lips was silenced before the look he found there. And when she spoke her voice was low and constrained.

"I'm sorry you said that."

"Are you? You weren't sorry earlier in the evening."

"I'm sorry now."

THE ENEMY AND A FRIEND

"It's a little late to be sorry."

She didn't reply. She was looking out into the light again with peering eyes. Objects in the landscape emerged, shadowless, in pale outline, brightened and disappeared.

"It isn't like you—not in the least like you," she murmured. "You've rather upset me, Phil."

"What did you expect?" he asked. "You've made a fool of me. You've been flirting with me abominably."

"And you repay me——"

"In your own coin," he put in.

"Don't, Phil." She covered her face with her hands a moment. "You've paid me well. Oh, that you could have said that! I meant what I said, Phil, back there. You've got to believe it now—you've shamed me so. You've got to know it—to believe it. I wasn't flirting with you. I was serious with you when I said I—I loved you. It's the truth, the ghastly truth, and you've got to believe it, whatever happens. No, don't touch me. I don't want you to think I'm that kind of a girl. I'm not. I've never been kissed before to-night, believe it or not. It's true, and now——"

She stopped and clutched him by the arm. "Tell me you believe it, Phil," she said almost fiercely, "that I—that I'm not that kind of a girl."

"Of course, you've said so——"

"No—not because I've said so, but because you think enough of me to believe it whether I've said so or not."

"I had never thought you that sort of a girl," he said slowly. "I've known you to flirt with other fellows, but I didn't think you really cared enough about men to bother, least of all about me. That's why I was a little surprised——"

"I couldn't flirt with you—I didn't feel that way.

THE SILENT BATTLE

I don't know why. I think because there was a dignity in our friendship—" she stopped again with a sharp sigh. "Oh, what's the use? I'm not like other girls—that's all. I can't make you understand."

"I hope I—understand——"

"I'm sorry, Phil, about what happened to-night."

She stopped, leaned back in her corner and, with one of her curious transitions, began laughing softly.

"It was such a wonderful opportunity—and you were so blissfully ignorant! Oh, Phil, and you did look such a fool!"

"Oh, did I?"

"I'm sorry. But I'd probably do it again—if I might—to-morrow. Jane Loring is so prim, so self-satisfied——"

The motor had been moving more slowly and the man in front after testing various mechanisms, brought the machine to a stop and climbed out. They heard him tinkering here and there and after a moment he opened the door and announced.

"Sorry, Miss Jaffray, but there's come a leak in the tank, and we've run out of gasoline."

XIX

LOVE ON CRUTCHES

MRS. PENNINGTON'S philosophy had taught her that it was better to be surprised than to be bored, and that even unpleasant surprises were slightly more desirable than no surprises at all. It was toward the end of January on her halting journey homeward from Aiken, one morning in Washington, that she saw in a local journal the announcement of an engagement between Miss Jane Loring and Mr. Coleman Van Duyn. To say that she was surprised puts the matter mildly, and it is doubtful whether the flight of her ennui compensated her for the sudden pang of dismay which came with the reading of this article. She had left New York the day after the affair at "The Pot and Kettle," and so had only the memory of Jane's confidences and Phil Gallatin's happy face to controvert the news.

And when some days later she arrived in New York, she found that, though unconfirmed in authoritative quarters, the rumors still persisted among her own friends and Jane's. Of Phil Gallatin she saw nothing and learned that he was out of town on an important legal matter and would not return for a week. When she called on the Lorings, Jane showed a disposition to avoid personal topics and at the mention of Philip Gallatin's name skillfully turned the conversation into other channels.

To a woman of Mrs. Pennington's experience the hint was enough and she departed from the Loring mausoleum aware that something serious had happened which threat-

THE SILENT BATTLE

ened Phil Gallatin's happiness. But, in spite of the warmth of Jane's greeting and the careless way in which she had discussed the gossip of the hour, Nellie Pennington was not deceived, and by the time she was in her own brougham had made one of those rapid deductions for which she was famous. Jane looked jaded. Therefore, she was unhappy; therefore, she still loved Phil Gallatin. Phil Gallatin was working hard. Therefore, Phil was keeping straight; there must be some other cause for Jane's defection. What? Obviously—a woman. Who? Nina Jaffray.

Having reached this triumphant conclusion, Mrs. Pennington set about proving her several premises without the waste of a single moment of time. To this end she sought out Percy Endicott, who as she knew was better informed upon most people's affairs than they were themselves, and from him learned the truth. Philip Gallatin had been discovered with Nina Jaffray in his arms on the kitchen stairs at the "Pot and Kettle." Percy Endicott's talent for the ornamentation of bare narrative was well known and before he had finished the story he had convinced himself, if not his listener, that this happy event had brought to a culmination a romance of many years' standing and that Nina and Phil would soon be directing their steps, with all speed, to church.

Mrs. Pennington laughed, not because what Percy told amused her, but because this narrative showed her that however much she was still lacking in reliable details, her earliest deductions had been correct. She would not believe the story until it had been confirmed by "Bibby" Worthington to whom Coleman Van Duyn had related it as an eye-witness, and then herself supplied the grain of salt to make it palatable.

The grain of salt was her knowledge of Nina Jaffray's

LOVE ON CRUTCHES

extraordinary personality, which must account for any differences she discovered between the Phil Gallatin who kissed upon the back stairs and the Phil Gallatin with whom she was familiar. / Whatever his deficiencies in other respects, he had never been considered as available timber by the gay young married women of Mrs. Pennington's own set who had given him up in the susceptible sense as a hopeless case; and if Phil had been addicted to the habit of promiscuous kissing, he had gone about the pursuit with a stealth which belied the record of his unsentimental but somewhat tempestuous history. She found herself wondering not so much about what had happened to Phil as about how Nina had managed what *had* happened. Nina's remarkable confession a few days before Egerton Savage's party recurred to her mind, and Nina's clearly expressed intention to bring Phil to her chariot-wheel seemed somehow to have an intimate bearing upon the present situation. And yet, even admitting Nina's direct methods of seeking results, she could not understand how a fellow as much in love with another girl as Phil was could have been made so ready a victim. Could it be? No. There was no talk of *that*. And if Phil had again been in trouble, Mrs. Pennington knew that the indefatigable Percy would have told her of it.

She thought about the matter awhile and finally gave it up, uncertain whether to be anxious or only amused. But as the week went by she was given tangible evidence that whatever feelings Jane Loring cherished in her heart for Phil Gallatin, the wings of victory, for the present at least, were perched upon the banneret of Mr. Coleman Van Duyn. Jane rode, walked, and danced with him, and within a few short weeks, from a state of ponderous misery Coleman Van Duyn had revived and now bore the definite outlines of a well-fed and happy cupid.

THE SILENT BATTLE

The rumors of an engagement persisted, and Mrs. Pennington was not the only person forced against her judgment or inclination to believe that the old Van Duyn mansion would once more have a mistress. Dirwell De Lancey, whose tenderness in Jane's quarter had been remarked, went into retirement for a brief period, and only emerged when resignation had conquered surprise. Colonel Crosby Broadhurst sat in his corner at the Cosmos and wondered, as other people did, what the devil Jane Loring could see in Coley. Bibby Worthington still hovered amiably in Jane's background and would not be dislodged. He had proposed in due form to Jane and had been refused, but the cheerful determination of his bearing and his taste in cravats advised all who chose to concern themselves that he was still undismayed.

After Mrs. Pennington, who thought that she saw a light, perhaps the person most surprised at Jane's sudden attachment for Coleman Van Duyn was Mrs. Loring. She had listened with incredulity to Jane's first confession of her relations with Philip Gallatin and had waited with resignation a resumption of the conversation. But as the days passed and her daughter said nothing, she thought it time to take the matter into her own hands and told Jane of her intention to speak of it to her husband.

"I'll save you the trouble, Mother," said Jane, kissing her gravely on the forehead. "There is nothing between Mr. Gallatin and myself."

Mrs. Loring concealed her delight with difficulty.

"Jane, dear, something has happened."

"Nothing—nothing at all," said Jane. "I've changed my mind—that's all."

"Oh," said Mrs. Loring. This much imparted, Jane would say no more; the matter was dropped, and to Mrs.

LOVE ON CRUTCHES

Loring it seemed that in so far as Jane was concerned, Mr. Gallatin had simply ceased to exist.

But it was not without some difficulty that Jane convinced herself that this was the case. The day after the "Pot and Kettle" affair, Phil Gallatin wrote, 'phoned, wired and called. His note Jane consigned to the fire, his telephone was answered by Hastings, his wire followed his note, and to his visit she was out. This, she thought, should have concluded their relations, but the following morning brought another letter—a long one. She hesitated before deciding whether to open it or to return it, but at last she broke the seal and read it through, her lips compressed, her brows tangled angrily. It was a plea for forgiveness, and that was all. There were many regrets, many protestations of love, but not one word of explanation! He had even gone so far as to call the incident a trifle (a trifle, indeed!) and to call *her* to account for an intolerance which he had the temerity to say was unworthy of the great love that he had given her.

The impudence of him! What did he mean? Was the man mad? Or was this the New York idea? She realized now that he was an animal that she had met in an unfamiliar habitat, and that perhaps the things to be expected of him here were those dictated by the inconsiderable ideals of the day. It dismayed her to think that after all here in New York, she had only known him a little more than a week. His vision appeared—and was banished, and his letter, torn again and again into small pieces was consigned to the flames of her open fire. She made no reply.

Another letter came on the morrow, was read like the other, but likewise destroyed. His persistence was amazing. Would he not take a hint and save *her* the un-

THE SILENT BATTLE

pleasant duty of sending his letters back to him unopened? Apparently not! And with the letters came baskets of flowers which, like those from Mr. Van Duyn, filled her room with pleasant odors.

She was willing to believe now that a word of explanation, a clue to his extraordinary behavior might have paved the way to reconciliation, and she found herself wondering in a material way what was becoming of him and worrying, in spite of herself, as to his future, of which, as she had once fondly believed, she was the guardian. What was he doing with himself in the evenings?

This thought sent the blood rushing to her cheeks and hardened her heart against him. He was with Nina Jaffray, of course. In his last letter he had written that he must go away on business and for two mornings no letter arrived. She missed these letters and was furious with herself that it was so. But the energy of her anger was conserved in the form of further favors for Coley Van Duyn who radiated it in rapturous good-will toward all the world. When the letters were resumed, she locked them in her desk unread, determining upon his return to town to make them into a package and send them back in bulk. Many times she unlocked her desk and scrutinized the envelopes, but it was always to thrust them into their drawer which she shut and locked each time with quite unnecessary violence.

Another matter which caused some inquietude was Nellie Pennington's return to town, for Mrs. Pennington was the only person, besides Mr. Gallatin and her mother, in actual possession of her secret, the only person besides Mr. Gallatin whom it was necessary to convince as to the definiteness of her recantation. At their first meeting Jane had carried off the situation with a carelessness

LOVE ON CRUTCHES

which she felt had rather overshot the mark. Her visitor had accepted the hints with a disconcerting readiness and composure, and Jane had a feeling after Mrs. Pennington left the house that her efforts had been singularly ineffective; for she was conscious that her visitor had scrutinized her keenly and that anything she had said had been carefully sifted, weighed and subjected to that kind of cunning alchemy which clever women use to transmute the baser metals of sophistry into gold.

Mrs. Pennington had now taken an initiative in the friendship and refused to be disconcerted. Jane's engagements with Coleman Van Duyn provided no effectual hindrance to Mrs. Pennington's enthusiastic fellowship, and she frequently helped to make a party in which, to Mr. Van Duyn at least, three was a crowd. Mrs. Pennington accepted his presence without surprise, without annoyance or other emotion; and somehow succeeded in conveying the impression that she was conferring a favor upon them both, a favor for which, in her own heart at least, Jane was grateful.

It was not surprising to Jane, therefore, when one morning Nellie Pennington called up on the 'phone and made an engagement for the afternoon at five, at the Loring house, urging a need of Jane's advice upon an important matter. She entered the library, where Jane had been reading, with a radiance which did much to dispel the gloom of the day which had been execrable; and when her hostess suggested that they go upstairs to her own dressing-room, where they might be undisturbed, Nellie Pennington threw off her furs.

"No, thanks, darling," she said. "I can't stay long. And you know when one reaches my mature years, each stair has a separate menace."

"There's the lift," Jane laughed.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Oh, never! That would be a public confession. I'll stay here if you don't mind," and she sank into an arm-chair by the fire.

"Coley isn't coming?" she inquired.

"No," said Jane. "I had a headache."

Nellie Pennington sighed gratefully.

"You know, Jane, Coley is a nice fellow, but he's just about as plastic as the Pyramid of Cheops. You've done wonders with him, of course, and he is really quite bearable now, but it must have been wearing, wasn't it?"

"Oh, no," Jane smiled. "He's quite obedient."

"I sometimes wonder whether men are worth the pains we women waste on them." Mrs. Pennington went on reflectively. "When we are single they adore us for our defects; married, we have a real difficulty in making them love us for our virtues. But love abhors the word obedience. It knows no arbitrary laws. An obedient husband is like an egg without salt and far more indigestible. You're not going to marry Coley, are you, Jane?" she finished abruptly.

Jane paled and her head tilted the fraction of an inch. It was the first time Nellie Pennington had approached the subject so directly, and Jane had not decided whether to silence her questioner at once or to laugh her off when she broke in again.

"Oh, don't reply if you don't want to. I'm sure nothing I could say would have the slightest influence on your decision. It doesn't matter in the least whom one marries anyway, because whatever the lover is, the husband is always sure to be something quite different. If Coley is obedient now, married he'll be a Tartar."

"I—I didn't say I was going to marry Mr. Van Duyn."

"You didn't say you weren't."

LOVE ON CRUTCHES

"Why should I? Must a girl marry, because she receives the attentions——"

"*Exclusive* attentions," put in Mrs. Pennington quickly. "Jane, you're rather overdoing it," she finished frankly.

"I like Mr. Van Duyn very much," said Jane, her head lowered.

"But you don't love him. Oh, Jane," she whispered earnestly, "play the scene in your own way if you like, but don't try to hide the real drama from me."

"There is no drama," put in Jane. "It was a farce——"

"It's a drama in Phil Gallatin's heart. Can you be blind to his struggle?"

"I care nothing for Mr. Gallatin's struggles," said Jane, her head high.

"You do. Love like yours comes only once in a woman's eyes. I saw it——"

"You're mistaken."

"No. And it isn't quenched with laughter——"

"Don't, Nellie."

"I must. You're trying to kill something in you that will not die."

"It's dead now."

"No—nor even sleeping. Don't you suppose I read you, silly child, your false gayety, the mockery of your smiles, and the way you've thrown Coley Van Duyn into the breach to soothe your pride—even let an engagement be undenied so that Phil could think how little you cared? You once let me behind the scenes; no matter how much you regret it, I'm still there."

"Mr. Gallatin is nothing to me."

Mrs. Pennington leaned back in her chair and smiled.

"You told me that your faith in Phil was unending."

THE SILENT BATTLE

Your eternity, my dear, lasted precisely one week."

Jane flashed around at her passionately, aroused at last, as Nellie Pennington intended that she should be.

"Oh, why couldn't he have explained?"

"Explain! At the expense of another girl? Phil is a gentleman."

Mrs. Pennington had had that reply ready. She had considered it carefully for some days.

Jane paused, and her eyes, scarcely credulous, sought the face of her visitor. Nellie Pennington met her look eagerly.

"Nina Jaffray's," she went on. "Could Phil tell why it happened? Obviously not."

"But he kissed her——"

Mrs. Pennington shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"As to that, Nina, of course, had reasons of her own."

"Nina—Miss Jaffray—reasons?"

"She probably asked him to——"

"Impossible!"

"She did."

"Do you know that?"

"No, but I know Nina."

"I can't see that that alters anything."

"But it does—amazingly—if you'll only think about it."

"I saw it all."

"Oh! Did you? I'm glad."

"Glad! Oh, Nellie!"

"Of course. Think how much worse it might have seemed if you hadn't."

"I don't understand."

"If some one else had told you, you might have believed anything."

LOVE ON CRUTCHES

"I saw enough to believe——"

"What did you see?"

"He—he—he just kissed her."

"Oh, Jane, think! What did you see? Why should Phil kiss a girl he doesn't love? Aren't there any kisses in the world but lovers' kisses? Think. You must. Phil's whole life and yours depend upon it."

Jane rose and walked quickly to the window.

"This conversation—is impossible."

Nellie Pennington watched her narrowly. She had created a diversion upon the flank, which, if it did nothing else, had temporarily driven Jane's forces back in confusion. She looked anxiously toward the door of the drawing-room and then smiled, for a figure had entered and was coming forward without hesitation.

With one eye on Jane, who was still looking out of the window, Nellie Pennington rose and greeted the newcomer.

"Hello, Phil. I had almost given you up. You don't mind, do you, Jane. I had to see Mr. Gallatin and asked if he wouldn't stop for me here."

At the sound of his name Jane had twisted around and now faced them, breathless. Mrs. Pennington was smiling carelessly, but Phil Gallatin, hat in hand, stood with bowed head before her. At the door into the hallway, the butler, somewhat uncertainly, hovered.

"Thank you, Hastings," Jane summoned her tongue to say. "That will be all."

XX

THE INTRUDER

AND when the man had gone her voice came back to her with surprising clearness.

“You were going, I think you said, Nellie, dear. So sorry. If you’ll excuse me I think I’ll hurry upstairs. I’m dining out and——”

“Jane!” Gallatin’s voice broke in. “Don’t go. Give me a chance—just half an hour—ten minutes. I won’t take more than that—and then——”

“I’m sorry, but——”

“You wouldn’t see me or reply to my letters, and so I had to choose some other way. Give me a moment,” he pleaded. “You can’t refuse me that.”

“I don’t see—how anything that you say can make the slightest difference—in anything, Mr. Gallatin,” she said haltingly. “We both seem to have been mistaken. It’s very much better to avoid a—a discussion which is sure to—to be painful to us both.”

“What do you know of pain,” he whispered, “if you can’t know the pain of absence? Nothing that you can say will hurt more than that, the pain of being ignored—forgotten—for another. I have stood it as long as I can, but you needn’t be afraid to tell me the truth. If you say that you love—that you’re going to marry Van Duyn, I’ll go—but not until then.”

“Mrs. Pennington is waiting for you, I think,” she gasped. But when she turned and looked into the drawing-room Mrs. Pennington was nowhere to be seen.

THE INTRUDER

“No,” he went on quickly. “She has gone. I asked her to. Oh, Jane, listen to me. I made a mistake—under the impulse of a foolish moment. I’ve been a fool—but I’m not ashamed of my folly. Perhaps it shocks you to hear me say that. But I’m not ashamed—my conscience is clear. Do you think I could look you in the eyes if there was any other image between us? Call me thoughtless, if you like, careless, inconsiderate of conventions, inconsiderate even of you, but don’t insult yourself by imputing motives that never existed—that never could exist while you were in my thoughts. Oh, Jane, can’t you understand? You’re the life—the bone—the breath of me. I have no thought that does not come from you, no wish—no hope that you’re not a part of. What has Nina Jaffray to do with you and me? If I kissed her it was because—because——” He stopped and could not go on.

“That is precisely what I want to know,” she said coolly.

“I—I can’t tell you.”

“No,” she said dryly. “I thought not. Miss Jaffray has every reason to be flattered at your attitude. I can only be thankful that you at least possess the virtue of silence—that you really are man enough to preserve the confidence of the women of your acquaintance. Otherwise, I myself might fare badly.”

“Stop, Jane!” he cried, coming forward and seizing her by the elbows. “It’s sacrilege. Look up into my eyes. You dare not, because you know that I speak the truth, because you know that you’ll discover in them a token of love unending—the same look that you’ve always found there, because when you see it you will recognize it as a force too great to conquer—too mighty to be argued away for the sake of a whim of your injured pride. Look up at me, Jane.”

THE SILENT BATTLE

He had his arms around her now; but she struggled in them, her head still turned away.

"Let me go, Mr. Gallatin," she gasped. "It can never be. You have hurt me—mortally."

"No. I'll never let you go, until you look up in my eyes and tell me you believe in me."

"It's unmanly of you," she cried, still struggling. "Let me go, please, at once."

Neither of them had heard the opening and closing of the front door, nor seen the figure which now blocked the doorway into the hall, but at the deep tones which greeted them, they straightened and faced Mr. Loring.

"I beg your pardon, Jane," he was saying with ironical amusement. "I chose the wrong moment it seems," and then in harsher accents as Gallatin walked toward him. "You! Jane, what does this mean?"

Miss Loring had reached the end of the Davenport where she stood leaning with one hand on its arm, a little frightened at the expression in her father's face, but more perturbed and shaken by the fluttering of her own heart which told her how nearly Phil Gallatin had convinced her against her will that there was nothing in all the world that mattered except his love and hers.

Her father's sudden appearance had startled her, too, for though no words had passed between father and daughter, she knew that her mother had already repeated the tale of her romance and of its sudden termination. She tried to speak in reply to Mr. Loring's question, but no words would come and after a silence burdened with meaning she heard Phil Gallatin speaking.

"It means, Mr. Loring," he was saying steadily, "that I love your daughter—that I hope, some day, to ask her to be my wife."

Loring came into the room, his eyes contracted, his

THE INTRUDER

bull neck thrust forward, his face suffused with blood.

"*You* want to marry my daughter? *You!* I think you're mistaken." He stopped and peered at one and then the other. "I've heard something about you, Mr. Gallatin," he said more calmly. "Your ways seem to be crossing mine more frequently than I like."

"I hardly understand you," said Gallatin clearly.

"I'll try to make my meaning plain. We needn't discuss at once the relations between you and my daughter. Whatever they've been or are now, they're less important than other matters."

"Other matters!" Gallatin exclaimed. Jane had straightened and came forward, aware of some new element in her father's antipathy. Loring glanced at her and went on.

"For some weeks past I've been aware of the activity of certain interests that you or your pettifogging little firm represent in regard to the plans of the Pequot Coal Company. I've followed your movements with some curiosity and read the letters you've written to the New York office with not a little amazement."

"*You* have read them?"

"Yes, I. I am the Pequot Coal Company, Mr. Gallatin."

Gallatin drew back a step and glanced at Jane.

"I was not aware——" he began.

"No, I guess not. But it's about time you were," Loring chuckled. He walked the length of the room and back, his hands behind him, passing Jane as though he was unaware of her existence, his huge bulk towering before Gallatin again.

"You are trying to stop the sale of the Sanborn mines," he sneered. "You're meddling, sir. We tested that matter in the courts. The court records——"

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Your courts, Mr. Loring," put in Gallatin, now thoroughly aroused. "I'm familiar with the evidence in the case you speak of."

"My courts!" Loring roared. "The Supreme Court of the State! We needn't discuss their decisions here."

"No, but we will discuss them—elsewhere," he said soberly. He stopped and, with a quick change of voice. "Mr. Loring, you'll pardon me if I refuse to speak of this further. I'm sorry to learn that——"

"I'm not through yet," Loring broke in savagely, with a glance at Jane. "We've known for some time that the Sanborn case was in the hands of Kenyon, Hood and Gallatin, and we've been at some pains to keep ourselves informed as to any action that would be taken by your clients. We know something about you, too, Mr. Gallatin, and we have followed your recent investigations with some interest and not a little amusement. If we ever had any fear of a possible perversion of justice in this case, through your efforts, I may say that it has been entirely removed by our knowledge of your methods and of the personal facts of your career."

"Father!" Jane's fingers were on his arm, and her whisper was at his ear, but he raised a hand to silence her, putting her aside.

"You're aligning yourself with a discredited cause, sir. Your case is a bubble which I promise to prick at the opportune moment. The tone of your letters requesting an interview with a view to reopening the case is impertinent. The compromise suggested is blackmail and will be treated as such."

Gallatin flushed darkly and then turned white at the insult.

"Mr. Loring, I'll ask you to choose your words more carefully," he said angrily, his jaw set.



“ ‘Father!’ . . . Jane’s whisper was at his ear.”

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THE INTRUDER

“I’m not in the habit of mincing words, and I’ll hardly spare you or the people who employ you for the sake of a foolish whim of a girl, even though she is——”

“You *must* not, Father,” whispered Jane again, in tones of anguish. “You’re in your own house. You’re violating all the——”

“Be quiet,” he commanded shortly, “or leave the room.”

“I can’t be quiet. Mr. Gallatin for the present is my guest and as such——”

“Whatever Mr. Gallatin’s presence here means, there’s little doubt——”

“I—I asked him to come here,” Jane stammered. “I beg you to leave us.”

“No! If Mr. Gallatin has come here at your invitation, all the more reason that you, too, should hear what I have to say to him.”

“I will not listen. Will you please go, Mr. Gallatin, at once?”

Phil Gallatin, pale but composed, was standing immovable.

“Thank you. If there’s something else your father has to say, I’ll listen to it now,” he said. “I can only hope that it will be nothing that he will regret.”

Jane drew aside and threw herself on the divan, her head buried in her hands.

“There’s hardly a danger of that,” said Loring grimly. “I’ll take the risk anyway. I’m in the habit of keeping my house in order, Mr. Gallatin, and I’m not the kind to stop doing it just because a duty is unpleasant. There seems to be something between you and my daughter. God knows what! I have known it for some days, but I haven’t spoken of it to her or hunted for you because I had reason to believe that she had had the good sense to forget the

THE SILENT BATTLE

silly romantic ideas you had been putting into her head. I see that I was mistaken. Your presence in this house is the proof of it. I'll try to make my objections known in language that not only you but my daughter will understand."

With a struggle Gallatin regained his composure, folded his arms and waited. Jane raised her head, her eyes pleading, then quietly rose and walking across the room, laid her fingers on Phil Gallatin's arm and stood by his side, facing her father. Mr. Loring began speaking, but she interrupted him quickly.

"Whatever you say to Philip Gallatin, Father, you will say to me. Whatever you know of him—I know, too, past or present. I love him," she finished solemnly.

One of Gallatin's arms went around her and his lips whispered, "Thank God for that, Jane." And then together they faced the older man. Mr. Loring flinched and some of the purple went out of his face, but his lower lip protruded and his bulk seemed to grow more compact as the meaning of the situation grew upon him. His small eyes blinked two or three times and then glowed into incandescence.

"Oh, I see," he muttered. "It's as bad as that, is it? I hadn't supposed——"

"Wait a moment, sir," said Gallatin clearly. "Call it bad, if you like, but you haven't a right to condemn me without a hearing."

Loring laughed. "A hearing? I know enough already, Mr. Gallatin."

Gallatin took a step forward speaking quietly. "You're making a mistake. Whatever you've heard about me, I've at least got the right of any man to defend himself. You've already chosen to insult me in your own house. I've passed that by, because this is not the time

THE INTRUDER

or place to answer. Kenyon, Hood and Gallatin are not easily intimidated—nor am I. I want you to understand that here—now.” His voice fell a note. “When I speak of myself it is a different matter. I don’t know what you’ve heard about me, and I don’t much care, for in respect to one thing at least I’ll offer no excuse or extenuation. That’s past and I’m living in the hope that as time goes on, it will not be borne too heavily against me. But you’ve got to believe whether you want to or not that I would rather die than have your daughter suffer because of me.”

“She has suffered already.”

“No, no!” cried Jane. “Not suffered—only lived, father.”

“And now you’ve quit, I suppose,” said the old man ironically, “reformed—turned over a new leaf. See here, Mr. Gallatin, this thing has gone far enough. I’ve listened to you with some patience. Now you listen to me! You’ve come into my house unbidden, invaded my privacy here and insinuated yourself again into the good graces of my daughter, who, I had good reason to believe, had already forgotten you. Your training has served you well. Fortunately I’m not so easily deceived. Until the present moment I have trusted my daughter’s good judgment. Now I find I must use my own. If she isn’t deterred by a knowledge of your history, perhaps I can supply her with information which will not fail. I can hardly conceive that she will overlook your conduct when it involves the reputation of another woman!”

“Father!”

Henry Loring had reached the drawing-room door and now stood, his legs apart, his fists clenched, his words snapping like the receiver of a wireless station.

“Deny—if you like! It will have no conviction with

THE SILENT BATTLE

me—or with her. Look at her, Mr. Gallatin,” he said, his finger pointing. “There are limits even to *her* credulity. She will hardly be pleased to learn of the accident to the motor which obliged you and your companion—very opportunely, indeed, to spend the night in a——”

“Stop, sir!” Gallatin’s hand was extended and his voice dominated. “Say what you like about me. I’ve invited that, but I’ll not listen while you rob a woman of her name.”

Jane stood like an ivory figure in the pale light, her eyes dark with incomprehension, searching Gallatin’s face for the truth.

“There was a woman?” she asked.

Gallatin hesitated.

“Yes, there was a woman. There needn’t be any mystery about that. I wasn’t aware that there had been any mystery. It was Nina Jaffray. We were stranded back in the country coming from the ‘Pot and Kettle.’ We found a farmhouse and stayed there. There wasn’t anything else to do. You can’t mean that you believe——!”

Jane had turned from him and walked toward the door.

“It hadn’t been my intention to mention the lady’s name,” Loring laughed. “But since Mr. Gallatin has seen fit to do so——”

“You’re going too far, Mr. Loring. There are ways of reaching a man even of your standing in the community.”

Loring chuckled.

“I fancy that this is a matter which won’t be discussed elsewhere,” he said.

Gallatin’s eyes sought Jane’s, who now stood in the

THE INTRUDER

doorway into the hall, one hand clutching the silken hangings.

“You can’t believe this, Jane? You have no right to. Your father has been told a sinful lie. It’s doing Nina a harm—a dreadful harm. Can’t you see?”

At the mention of Nina’s name Jane’s lips twisted scornfully and with a look of contempt she turned and was gone.

Gallatin took a few steps forward as though he would have followed her, but Loring’s bulky figure interposed.

“We’ve had enough of this, sir,” he growled. “Let’s have this scene over. We’re done with you. You’ve played h—— with your own life and you’ll go on doing it, but you won’t play it with me or with any of mine, by G——. I’ve got your measure, Mr. Gallatin, and if I find you interfering here again, I’ll take some other means that will be less pleasant. D’ye hear? I’ve heard the story they’re telling about you and my daughter up in the woods. It makes fine chatter for your magpies up and down the Avenue. D—— them! Thank God, my daughter is too clean for them or you to hurt. It was a great chance for you. You knew what you were about. You haven’t lived in New York all these years for nothing. You thought you could carry things through on your family name, but to make the matter sure you tried to compromise my daughter so that——”

Loring paused.

Gallatin had stood with head bowed before the door through which Jane had disappeared. His ears were deaf to Loring’s tirade; but as he realized the terms of the indictment, he raised his head, stepped suddenly forward, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing into those of the older man, scarcely a foot away. In Phil Gallatin’s expression

THE SILENT BATTLE

was the dumb fury of an animal at bay, a wild light in his eyes that was a personal menace. Loring did not know fear, but there was something in the look of this young man who faced him which told him he had gone too far. Gallatin's right arm moved upward, and then dropped at his side again.

"You—you've said enough, Mr. Loring," he gasped, struggling for his breath. "Almost more than is good—for both—for either of us. You—you—you're mistaken, sir."

And then as though ashamed of his lack of control he turned aside, and took up his hat. Henry Loring strode to the wall and pressed his thumb to a bell.

"I'll stand by my mistakes," he said more calmly. "You came to the wrong house, Mr. Gallatin, and I think you won't forget it. I'd like you to remember this, too, and I'm a man of my word. You keep your fingers off my affairs, either business or personal, or I'll make New York too hot to hold you," and then as the man appeared, "Hastings, show this gentleman out!"

XXI

TEMPTATION

PHILIP GALLATIN had a bad night. From the Loring house he trudged forth into the rain and sleet of the Park where he walked until his anger had cooled; then dined alone in a corner at the Cosmos, avoiding a group of his familiars who were attuned to society. From there he went directly to his rooms.

The house of his fathers was in a by-street in the center of the fashionable shopping district, and this dwelling, an old-fashioned double house of brown stone, was the only relic that remained to Phil of the former grandeur of the Gallatins. Great lawyers, however successful in safeguarding the interests of their clients, are notable failures in safeguarding the interests of their own. Philip Gallatin, the elder, had inherited a substantial fortune, but had added nothing to it. He had lived like a prince and was known as the most lavish host of his day. He associated with the big men of his generation when the Gallatin house was famous alike for its cellar and kitchen. Here were entertained presidents and ex-presidents of the United States, foreign princes, distinguished artists and literary men, and here it was claimed, over Philip Gallatin's priceless Madeira, the way had been paved for an important treaty with the Russian government.

Philip Gallatin, the second, had made money easily and spent it more easily, to the end that at the time of his death it was discovered that the home was heavily mortgaged, and that his holdings in great industrial corpora-

THE SILENT BATTLE

tions, many of which he had helped to organize, had been disposed of, leaving an income which, while ample for Mrs. Gallatin and her only child during the years of his boyhood, when the taste of society was for quieter things, was entirely inadequate to the growing requirements of the day. At his mother's death, just after he came of age, Phil Gallatin had found himself possessed of less than eight thousand a year gross, and a mortgage which called for almost one-half that sum. But he resolutely refused to part with the house, for it had memories and associations dear to him.

Three years ago, with a pang which he still remembered, he had decided to rent out the basement and lower floors for business purposes and apply the income thus received to taxes and sinking fund, but he still kept the rooms on the third floor which he had always occupied, as his own. An old servant named Barker, one of the family retainers, was in attendance. Barker had watched the tide of commerce flow in and at last engulf the street which in his mind would always be associated with the family which he had served so long. But he would not go, so Philip Gallatin found a place for him. In the building he was janitor, engineer, rent collector, and valet. He cooked Phil's breakfast of eggs and coffee and brought it up to him, made his bed and kept his rooms with the same scrupulous care that he had exercised in the heyday of prosperity. He was Phil's doctor, nurse and factotum, and kept the doors of Gallatin's apartments against all invaders.

Phil Gallatin wearily climbed the two long flights which led to the rooms. He had had a trying day. All the morning had been spent with John Sanborn, and a plan had been worked out based upon the labors of the past three weeks. One important decision had been

TEMPTATION

reached, and a concession wrung at last from his clients. He had worked at high tension since the case had been put into his hands, traveling, eating when and where he could, working late at the office, sleeping little, and in spare moments had written to or thought of Jane. The strain of his anxiety was now beginning to tell. The events of the afternoon had filled him with a new sense of the difficulties of his undertakings. Loring would fight to the last ditch. All the more glory in driving him there!

But of Jane he thought with less assurance. His own mind had been so innocent of transgression, his own heart so filled with the thought of her, that her willingness to believe evil of him and of Nina had caused a singular revulsion of feeling which was playing havoc with his sentiments. It had not mattered so much when Jane's indictment had been for him alone; that, he had deserved and had been willing to stand trial for; but with Nina's reputation at stake Jane's intolerance took a different aspect. Whatever Nina Jaffray's faults, and they were many, Phil Gallatin knew, as every one else in the Cedarcroft crowd did, that they were the superficial ones of the day and generation and that Nina's pleasure was in the creation of smoke rather than flame.

The failure of the motor after the "Pot and Kettle" party had been unfortunate, and the lack of oil subsequently explained by the drunkenness of the chauffeur who had been discharged on Miss Jaffray's return to town. Phil Gallatin had found a farmhouse, where Nina had been made comfortable. There was no gasoline within five miles of the place. The chauffeur was unable to cope with the situation and there was nothing for it but to wait until morning, when the farmer himself drove Gallatin to the nearest village for the needed fuel.

Under other circumstances it might have been an

THE SILENT BATTLE

amusing experience, but the events of the evening had put a damper on them both. Nina's impudence was smothered in her fur collar, and she had sat sulkily through the hours of darkness, gazing at the stove, saying not a word, and the delinquent chauffeur had meanwhile gone to sleep on the floor of the kitchen. Morning saw them safe in town at an early hour, and it had been at Nina's request that the incident had not been mentioned. Until to-day Gallatin had not given it a thought. He had not seen Nina, and while he had frequently thought of her, the flight of time and the press of affairs had given her singular confession a perspective that took something from its importance. But Jane's attitude had suddenly made Nina the dominant figure in the situation. Whatever mischief she had created in his own affairs, she had not deserved this!

He entered his rooms filled with bitterness toward Henry Loring, dull resentment toward Jane. Everything in the world that he hoped for had centered about her image, and he loved her for what she had been to him, what she had made of him and for what he had made of himself, but in his mind a definite conviction had grown, that in so far as he was concerned their relations were now at an end. He had abased himself enough and further efforts at a reconciliation could only demean his dignity, already jeopardized, and his pride, already mortally wounded.

He threw himself heavily into his Morris chair and tried to think about other things. Upon the table there was a legal volume which he had brought up from the office the night before, filled with slips of paper for the reference pages which Tooker had placed there for him. He took it up and began to read, but his mind wandered. The type swam before his eyes and in its place Jane's

TEMPTATION

face appeared, ivory-colored as he had last seen it, and her eyes dark with pain and incomprehension looked scornfully out of the page. He closed the book and gazed around the room, into the dusty corners, with their mementos of his career: the oar that had been his when he had stroked the crew of his university, boxing gloves, foils and mask, photographs of football teams in which he had been interested, a small cabinet of cups—golf and steeplechase prizes, a policeman's helmet, the spoils of a college prank, his personal library (his father's was in a storage warehouse), trinkets of all sorts, steins innumerable, a tiny satin slipper, some ivories and—a small gold flask.

He got out of his chair, picked the flask up, and examined it as if it had been something he had never seen before. He ran his fingers over the chasing of the cup, noted the dents that had been made when it had fallen among the rocks, and the dark scar made in the embers of their fire.

Their fire! His fire and Jane's—burned out to ashes.

He put the flask back in its place and began slowly to pace the floor, his hands behind his back, his head bent forward, his eyes peering somberly. He stopped in his walk and put a lump of coal into the grate. He was dead tired and his muscles ached as though with a cold. In the next room his bed invited him, but he did not undress, for he knew that if he went to bed it would only be to lie and gaze at the gray patch of light where the window was. He had done that before and the memory of the dull ache in his body during the long night when he had suffered came to him and overpowered him. He had that pain now—coming slowly, as it had sometimes done before when he had been working on his nerve. It didn't grip him as once it had done, with its clutch of fire, driving everything else from his thoughts. But he was conscious that the

THE SILENT BATTLE

craving was still there, and he knew that the thing he wanted was the panacea for the thoughts that oppressed him. By its means all the aches of his body would be cured and the pain of his thoughts. Yes! He stopped at the table and took up a cigarette. But there was one thing in him, one thing more important than physical pain, than physical exhaustion or singing nerves, one small celestial spark that he had kindled, fostered, and tended which had warmed and comforted his entire being—the glow of his returning self-respect; and this thing he knew, if those physical pangs were cured, would die.

He took up his measured tread of the floor, counting his footsteps from window to door and back again, watching the patterns in the rug and picking out the figures upon which he was to put his feet. Once or twice his footsteps led him as though unconsciously to the cabinet in the corner, where he stopped with a short laugh. He had forgotten that there was no panacea there. Later on he rang the bell for Barker, only to remember that the man had gone away for the night. He wanted some one to talk to—some one—any one who could make him forget. What was the use? What did it matter to any one but himself if he forgot or not? What was he fighting for? For himself? Yesterday and the days before he had been fighting for Jane, fighting gladly—downtown, in his clubs, at people's houses, in the Enemy's country, where the Enemy was to be found at every corner, at his very elbow, because he knew that nothing could avail against his purpose to win Jane back to him.

Now he had no such purpose. Jane had turned from him because some one had lied about him, turned away and left him here alone in the dark with this hideous thing that was rising up in him and would not let him think.

He went to the table and filled a pipe with trembling

TEMPTATION

fingers. A terror oppressed him, the imminence of a danger. It was the horror of being alone, alone in the room where this thing was. He knew it well. It had been here before and it had conquered him. It lurked in the dark corners and grinned from his bookshelves and laughed in the crackling of his fire. "Come," he could hear it say, "don't you remember old Omar?"

"Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling;
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing."

His pulses throbbed and his head was burning, though a cold sweat had broken out on his brows and temples, and his feet were cold—ice cold. The tobacco had no taste, and it only parched his throat the more. He stumbled into the bathroom and bathed his head and hands in the cold water, and drank of it in huge gulps. That relieved him for a moment and he went back to his chair and took up his book.

His sickness came back upon him slowly, a premonitory faintness and then a gripping, aching fire within. The book trembled in his hands and the type swam in strange shapes. He clenched his fingers, threw the book from him and rose with an oath, reaching for his hat and coat and stumbling toward the door. Downstairs, less than a block away—

Beside the bookcase he caught a glimpse of his image in the pier glass. He stopped, glared at himself and straightened.

"Where are you going, d——n you? Where? Like a thief in the night? Look at me! You can't! Where are you going?"

THE SILENT BATTLE

There was no answer but the laughter of the flames and the sneer of a motor in the Avenue.

His hand released the knob and he turned back into the room, with eyes staring, teeth set and face ghastly.

“No, by G——. You’ll not go, Phil Gallatin, not from this room to-night—not for that. Do you hear? You’ll fight this thing out here and now.”

He dropped his coat and hat and strode like a fury to the window. There he lay across the sill, and throwing the sash open wide, drank the night air into his lungs in deep breaths.

In a moment the crisis had passed. After a while he closed the window, came back into the room and sank into his chair, utterly exhausted. His mind comprehended dully that he had fought and won, not for Jane, nor for his future, but for that small fire that was still glowing in his breast. He closed his eyes and relaxed his clenched fingers. His nerves still tingled but only slightly like the tremor of harpstrings in a passing storm. He was very tired and in a moment he fell asleep.

When he awoke, the light of dawn was filtering in at the windows. The lamp had gone out. He struck a match and made a light. It was six o’clock. He had slept seven hours. He yawned, stretched himself and looked at his disordered reflection in the mirror, suddenly awake to the beginning of a new day. The aches in his body had gone and his mind was clear again. He leaned forward upon the mantel and silently apostrophized his image.

“You’re going to win, Phil Gallatin. Do you hear? You’re *not* afraid. You don’t care what the world says. You’re not fighting for the world’s opinion. It’s only your own opinion of yourself that matters a d——n. If you win that, you’ve won everything in the world worth winning.”

TEMPTATION

He laughed pleasantly and his image smiled back at him.

“Salut! Monsieur! You’re a good sort after all! You’ve got more sand than I thought you had. I’m beginning to like you a great deal. You can look me in the eye now, straight in the eye. That’s right. We understand each other.”

He faced around into the room which had been the scene of so many of his failures, and of his last and greatest success. The light from the windows was growing brighter. It was painting familiar objects with pale violet patches, glinting on glassware and porcelain like the cold light of intellect, which now dominated the merely physical. He swept the room with a glance. Before the light the shadows were fading. The Enemy——

There *was* no Enemy!

Gallatin poked down the embers of the fire and heaped on wood and coal. He stripped to his underclothes, did twenty minutes with dumb-bells and chest weights, and then went in to draw his bath, singing. He soused himself in the cold water and came out with chattering teeth, but in a moment his body was all aglow.

“It’s a good body,” he mused as he rubbed it, “a perfectly good body, too good to abuse. There’s a soul inside there, too. Where, nobody seems to know, but it’s there and it isn’t in the stomach, and that’s a sure thing, though that’s where the stomach thinks it is. We’ll give this body a chance, if you please, a square deal all around.”

He chuckled and thumped himself vigorously, as though to assure himself of the thoroughness of his recuperation. Seven o’clock found him on the street walking vigorously in the direction of the Park. He knew that there was no chance of meeting Jane Loring at this hour

THE SILENT BATTLE

of the morning, but he chose the west side that he might not even see the marble mass where she was sleeping, for the memory of what had happened there yesterday rankled like an angry wound.

He breakfasted at the Cosmos at eight, and before nine was at the office where he finished the morning mail before even Tooker and the clerks were aware of his presence there. There were many threads of the Sanborn case still at a loose end and he spent a long while writing and dictating to his stenographer, who was still at his side, when, at about eleven o'clock, the office boy brought in Nina Jaffray's card.

He was still looking at it when Nina entered.

"I was afraid you might be busy, Phil," she said calmly, "but I wanted to see you about something."

He nodded to his stenographer and she took up her papers and went.

"The mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet and so——"

"Do sit down, Nina."

"I'm not interrupting you *very* much, am I?"

He laughed.

"No. I'm glad you came, if only to prove to my friends that I really *do* work."

"Oh, is *that* all?"

"No. I'm glad to see you for other reasons."

"I'm curious to know them."

"To be assured, for one thing, that you've forgiven me for my boorishness——"

"Oh, that! Yes. Of course."

"And for another—that your mood will spare me the pains of further making a fool of myself."

Nina shrugged lightly and laughed at him.

TEMPTATION

“Of course you know your limitations, Phil. How could I promise you that?”

Gallatin smiled at her. She was very fetching this morning in a wide dark beaver hat with a lilac veil, and her well-cut tailor-made, snugly fitting in the prevailing mode, defined the long lines of her slim figure which seemed in his office chair to be very much at its ease.

“Will you be serious?”

“In a moment. For the present I’m so overjoyed at seeing you, that I’ve forgotten what I came for. Oh, yes—Phil, I’m hopelessly compromised and you’ve done it. Don’t laugh and don’t alarm yourself. You’re doing both at the same time—but I really am—seriously compromised. There’s a story going around that you and I——”

“Yes, I’ve heard it,” he said grimly.

“What interest people can possibly discover in the mishaps of a belated platonic couple in a snowstorm is more than I can fathom. Of course, if there had been anything for them to talk about, I’d have come off scot-free. As it is I’m pilloried in the market place as a warning to budding innocence! Imagine it! Me! I’m everything that’s naughty, from Eve to Guinevere. It would be quite sad, if it wasn’t so amusing. Weren’t we the very presentment of amatory felicity? Can’t you see us now, swathed in our fur coats, sitting like two bundled mummies upon each side of that monstrosity they called a stove, ‘The Parlor Heater,’ that was the name, from Higgins and Harlow, Phila., Pa., done in nickel at the top. Can’t you see us sitting upright on those dreadful hair-cloth chairs, silent and *so* miserable? That, my dear Philip, was the seductive hour in which I fell from grace. Touching picture, isn’t it?”

Gallatin refused to smile.

“Who told this story, Nina?”

THE SILENT BATTLE

"The chauffeur probably. I discharged him the next day."

"Of course—that was it. But it's such a silly yarn. Who will believe it——?"

She threw up her hands in mock despair.

"Every one—unfortunately. You see Coley Van Duyn didn't help matters any by telling about your kissing me on the stairs."

"D——n him," said Phil, through his teeth.

"Besides, I've been careless of their opinion for so long that people are only glad to get something tangible."

"But it isn't tangible. That farmer out there could——"

Nina raised her hand.

"Denial is confession, my dear. I shall deny nothing. I shall only smile. In my saddest moments the memory of Higgins and Harlow's parlor heater with its nickel icicles around the top will restore my equanimity. I don't think I've ever before really appreciated the true symbolism of the nickel icicle."

Gallatin had risen and was pacing the floor before her.

"This gossip must be stopped," he said scowling at the rug. "If I can't stop it in one way, I can in another."

"And drag my shattered fabric into the rumpus? No, thanks. *J'y suis—j'y reste*. The rôle of martyr becomes me. In my own eyes I'm already canonized. I think I like the sensation. It has the merit of being a novel one at any rate."

"Nina, do stop talking nonsense," he put in impatiently. "I'm not going to sit here placidly and let them tell this lie."

"Well,"—Nina leaned back in her chair and tilted

TEMPTATION

her head sideways—"what are you going to do about it?"

"I'll make them answer to me—personally. It was my fault. I ought to have walked home, I suppose."

"But you didn't—that's the rub. They won't answer to you personally anyway, at least nobody but the chauffeur, and he might do it—er—unpleasantly."

"I'll thrash him—I'll break his——"

"No, you won't. It wouldn't do the least bit of good, and besides it would make matters worse if *he* thrashed *you*. There's only one thing left for you to do, my friend."

"What?"

"Marry me!"

Phil Gallatin stopped pacing the floor and faced her, frowning.

"You still insist on that joke?"

"I do. And it's no joke. It seems to be the least thing that you can do, under the circumstances."

"Oh, is it!"

"Of course. You wouldn't leave things as they are, would you? Think of my shrinking susceptibilities, the atrocious significance of your negligence. Really, Phil, I don't see how you can refuse me!"

Gallatin laughed. He understood her now.

"I'm immensely flattered. I'll marry you with great pleasure——"

"Oh, thanks."

"If I ever decide to marry any one."

"Phil!"

She glanced past him out of the window, smiling.
"And you're not going to marry—any one?"

"No."

"I was afraid you might be." She rose and took up

THE SILENT BATTLE

her silver bric-a-brac which clanked cheerfully. She had learned what she came for.

"Oh, well, I won't despair. I'm not half bad, you know. Think it over. Some day, perhaps."

"It would be charming, I'm sure," he said politely.

"And, Phil——" She paused.

"What?"

"Come and see a fellow once in a while, won't you? You know, propinquity is love's *alter ego*."

"I'm sure of it. Perhaps that's why I'm afraid to come."

She laughed again as she went out and he followed her to the door of the outer office where Miss Crenshaw and Miss Gillespie scrutinized her perfectly appointed costume and then tossed their heads the fraction of an inch, adjusted their sidecombs and went on with their work.

XXII

SMOKE AND FIRE

DOWNSTAIRS Miss Jaffray entered her machine and was driven northward.

It is not for a moment to be supposed during the weeks which followed Mr. Egerton's party that Miss Jaffray had retired from the social scene. And if her rebuff at Phil Gallatin's hands had dampened the ardor of her enjoyment, no sign of it appeared. She was more joyously satirical, more unmitigably bored, more obtrusively indifferent than ever. But those who knew Nina best discovered a more daring unconviction in her opinions and a caustic manner of speech which spared no one, not even herself. She was, if anything, a concentrated essence of Nina Jaffray.

A woman's potentiality for mischief proceeds in inverse ratio to her capacity for benevolence, and Nina's altruism was subjective. She gave her charity unaffectedly to all four-legged things except the fox, which had been contributed to the economic scheme by a beneficent Providence for the especial uses of cross-country riders. She spent much care and sympathy upon her horses, and exacted its equivalent in muscular energy. Two-legged things enjoyed her liking in the exact proportion that they contributed to her amusement or in the measure that they did not interfere with her plans.

But the word benevolent applied to Nina with about as much fitness as it would to the Tropic of Capricorn.

The motto of New York is "The Devil Take the

THE SILENT BATTLE

Hindmost," and it feelingly voiced Nina's sentiments in the world and in the hunting field. She had always made it a practice to ride well up with the leaders, and to keep clear of the underbrush, and had never had much sympathy for the laggards. There was a Spartan quality in her point of view with regard to others, which remained to be put to the test with regard to herself. The occasion for such a test, it seemed, had arrived. For the first time in her life she was apparently denied the thing she most wanted. She had even been willing to acknowledge to herself that she wouldn't have wanted Phil Gallatin if she hadn't discovered that he wanted some one else.

But her liking for him had been transmuted into a warmer regard with a rapidity which really puzzled her and forced her to the conclusion that she had cared for him always. And Phil Gallatin's indifference had stimulated her interest in him to a degree which made it necessary for her to win him away from Jane Loring at all hazards.

She was not in the least unhappy about the matter. Here was a real difficulty to be overcome, the first in personal importance that she had ever faced, and she met it with a smile, aware that all of the arts which a woman may use (and some which she may not) must be brought into play to accomplish her ends.

As a matter of fact, Nina's mechanism was working at the highest degree of efficiency and she was taking a real delight in life, such as she had never before experienced. Since the "Pot and Kettle" affair she had thought much and deeply, had noted Coleman Van Duyn's attentions to Jane Loring, and her acceptance of them, had heard with an uncommon interest of their reported engagement and had kept herself informed as to the goings and comings of Phil Gallatin. And she read Jane

SMOKE AND FIRE

Loring as one may read an open book. Their personal relations were the perfection of amiability. They had met informally on several occasions when Nina had noted with well-concealed amusement the slightly exaggerated warmth of Jane's greeting, and had taken care to return this display of friendship in kind. Everything added to the conviction that Jane's love of Phil was only exceeded by her hatred of Nina Jaffray.

And yet until this morning Nina had had moments of uncertainty, for the incident Jane had witnessed was too trivial to stand the test of sober second thought, and Jane was just silly enough to forgive and forget it.

Nina's visit to Phil Gallatin's office had agreeably surprised her, for Phil had made it perfectly clear that his estrangement from Jane still existed. But to make the matter doubly sure, Nina had decided to play a card she had been holding in reserve. In other words, more smoke was needed and Nina was prepared to provide the fuel.

First she met Coleman Van Duyn by appointment at her own house, and they had a long chat, during which, without his being aware of it, he was the subject of a searching examination which had for its object the revelation of the exact relation between himself and Miss Loring. Even Coley, it seemed, was not satisfied with the state of affairs. They were not engaged. No. He was willing to admit it, but he had hopes that before the winter was over Miss Loring would see things his way. His dislike of Phil Gallatin was thinly veiled and Nina played upon it with a skill which left nothing to be desired, to the end that at the last Coley came out into the open and declared himself flat-footed.

"I don't know—your relations with him, Nina. Don't care, really. You know your way about and all that sort

THE SILENT BATTLE

of thing, but he's going it too strong. I'm tired of beatin' about the bush. I know a thing or two about Phil Galatin and I'll tell 'em soon. It's time people knew the sort of a Johnny that fellow is."

"Oh, I know, Coley. You're prejudiced. You've got a right to be. A man doesn't want any scandal hanging around the name of the girl he's going to marry. Everybody knows, of course, that Phil and Jane Loring were together last summer up in the woods and that——"

Van Duyn had risen, his eyes more protrusive, his face more purple than was good for him. It was the first time he had heard that story spoken of with such freedom, and it shocked him.

"It wasn't Jane," he roared. "She wasn't the only woman in Canada last summer. How do you know it was Jane?"

"She admitted it," said Nina sadly.

"Oh, she did! Well, what of it? If I don't care, what business is it of anybody else? She suits me and I'm going to marry her."

He stopped and glared at Nina, as though it was she who was the sole author of his unhappiness. Nina only smiled up at him encouragingly.

"Of course, you are. That's one of the things I wanted to see you about. I think I can help you, Coley, if you'll let me."

She made him sit down again and when he was more composed, went on.

"You see it's this way. I don't mind your running Phil down, if it gives you any pleasure, but you might as well know that I don't share your opinions. He isn't your sort, you don't understand him, and he has managed to come between you and Jane. But I don't see the slightest use in getting excited. These silly romantic affairs

SMOKE AND FIRE

of the teens are seldom really dangerous. Phil's infirmities excited her pity."

"His infirmities!"

"Yes, but Jane Loring isn't the kind of a girl to put up with that kind of thing long."

"Rather—not!"

"Oh, I don't mean what you do. I mean that she isn't suited to him, that's all. There are other women who might marry him and make something of him."

"Who?" he sneered.

"I," she said calmly.

Her quiet tone transfixed him.

"You want to—to marry him?"

"Yes—and I'm going to. Perhaps you understand now how we can help each other."

"By George! I hadn't an idea, Nina. I knew you'd been flirting with him—and all that—but marriage!"

She nodded.

"You *are* a good sort," he grinned. "Do you really mean it? Of course I'll help you if I can, but I hardly see——"

"You don't have to see. Jane Loring may still have a fancy for Phil Gallatin, but it ought to be perfectly obvious that she can't marry him if he's going to marry me. All I want you to do just now is to make yourself necessary to Jane Loring. Propose to her again to-morrow," and then with convincing assurance, "I think she'll accept you."

"You do? Why?"

"That, if you'll pardon me, is a matter I do not care to discuss." She arose and dismissed him gracefully, and Van Duyn wandered forth into Gramercy Park with a feeling very like that of a timorous hospital patient who has for the first time been subjected to the X-ray.

THE SILENT BATTLE

Nina lunched alone, then dressed for the afternoon and ordered her machine. She had made no mistake in presupposing that Jane Loring's curiosity would outweigh her prejudices. In their talk upon the telephone there had been a slight hesitation, scarcely noticeable, on Jane's part, after which, she had expressed herself as delighted at the opportunity of seeing Nina at the Loring house.

Miss Jaffray entered the portals of the vast establishment, her slender figure lost in the great drawing-room, as she moved restlessly from one object of art to another awaiting her hostess, like a mischievous and lonely bacillus newly liberated into a new field of endeavor.

"Nina, dear!" said Jane effusively as she entered. "So sweet of you. I haven't really had a chance to have a talk with you for *ages*."

"How wonderfully pretty you look, Jane? I'm simply *wild* with envy of you."

It was the feminine convention. Each pecked the other just once below the eye and each wished that the other had never been born. Jane led the way into the library where they sat side by side on the big divan, where they both skillfully maneuvered for an opening for a while, feinting and parrying *carte* and *tierce*, advancing, retreating, neither of them willing to risk a thrust.

But at last, the preliminaries having given her the touch of her opponent's foil, Nina returned.

"You're really the success of the season, Jane. And you know when a back number like I am admits a thing like that about a *débutante*, it's pretty apt to be true, But the thing I can't understand is why you want to end it all and marry."

"Marry—whom?"

"Coley."

SMOKE AND FIRE

"Oh, you have some private source of information on the subject?" Jane asked pleasantly.

"None but your own actions," Nina replied coolly. "It's funny, too, because I've had an idea—ever since that Dryad story—I've feared that you were rather keen on Phil Gallatin."

Nina was forced to admiration of the carelessness of Jane's parry.

"Mr. Gallatin!" she said, her eyes wide with wonder. "What in the world made you think of him? If I was ever grateful to the man for his kindness up there in the woods, every instinct in me revolted at the memory of what people said of us. Do you think I could care for a man who would let a thing like that be told?" She hesitated a moment and then added, "Besides, there are other reasons why Mr. Gallatin and I could never be friends."

"Oh, I see," Nina said slowly, her gaze on the fire. "You know, I'm very fond of Phil, and though you may not approve of him, he's really one of the best fellows in the world."

"Well, why don't you marry him?" said Jane carelessly.

"Marry! Me!" Nina laughed softly up at the portrait over the mantel. "Good Lord, Jane, you want to bridle me! No, thanks. I've only one life, you know, and I hardly feel like spending it on the Bridge of Sighs. *My* recording angel wouldn't stand domestication. She's on the point of giving up the job already. I suppose I'll have to marry some day, but when I do I'll select the quiet, elderly widower of some capable person who has trained him properly. A well-trained husband may be a dull blessing, but he's safe. Not Phil Gallatin, my dear. The girl who marries Phil will have her hands full. But

THE SILENT BATTLE

he's *such* a dear! So solemn, so innocent-looking, as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, and yet——" she paused and sighed audibly.

Jane glanced at her and was silent.

"I've never thought of Phil as a marrying man," Nina went on. "The thing is impossible, and I'd very much rather have him as he is. But it does seem a pity about him because he has so many virtues—and he—he really makes love like an angel."

"Does he?" asked Jane, yawning politely. "But then so many men do that."

"Yes—I suppose so, but Phil is different somehow."

Jane laughed. "Yes, I gathered that—at the 'Pot and Kettle.'"

Nina glanced up and away. "You *did* see? It's a pity. I'm sorry. Quite imprudent of me, wasn't it? I suppose I ought to be horribly mortified, but I'm not. I've reached a point where I'm quite hardened to people's opinions—even to yours, Jane. But I confess I *was* bothered a little about that. I *am* glad you don't care for Phil, because it would have been awkward and it might have made a difference in our friendship. You'd have been sorry, wouldn't you?"

Jane swallowed. "Oh—of course, I would."

"But it doesn't matter now whether you saw or not, because I'm sure that you and Coley understand."

"I'm not sure that I do understand," said Jane with a smile toward the cloisonné jar at the window. "As a form of diversion I can't say that kissing has ever appealed to me."

"But then, you know, Jane, you're very young—may I say verdant? It's an innocent amusement, if considered so. The harm of it is in considering it harmful. You're a hopeless little Puritan. I can't see how you

SMOKE AND FIRE

and I have got along so well. I suppose it's because we're so different."

"Yes, perhaps that's it. But I'm sure we wouldn't be nearly so friendly if we ever interfered with each other."

"I'm glad we haven't, Jane, darling. I've really gotten into the way of depending on your friendship. You don't think I've strained it a little to-day by my—er—modern view of old conventions?"

"Not at all. For a Puritan I'm surprisingly liberal. I don't care at all whom my friends kiss—or why. It's none of my affair. I'd hardly make it so unless I was asked to."

Nina laid her fingers on Jane's arm. "But we *do* understand each other, don't we, Jane?"

"Yes, wonderfully. I'm so glad that you think it worth while to confide in me."

"I do. You're so sensible and tolerant. I'm almost too much of a freethinker for most people, and they're ready to believe almost anything of me. But you don't care what they say, do you, Jane?"

"No, I don't, Nina. It wouldn't make the slightest difference to me what people said of you."

And this was the truth, perhaps the first truth in fact or by inference which either of them had uttered. So far so good. Honors were even. Each of them was aware that the other was a hypocrite, each of them was playing the game of hide and seek, bringing into play all the arts of dissimulation to which the sex is heir. All is fair in love and war. This was both. Under such conditions, to the feminine conscience anything is justifiable. Nina had begun the combat with leisurely assurance; Jane, with a contempt which fortified her against mishap. The manners of each were friendly and confiding, their

THE SILENT BATTLE

tones caressing, but neither of them deceived the other and each of them knew that she didn't. Nina had taken the initiative. She had a mission and in this was at a slight advantage, for Jane had not yet begun to suspect what that mission was. She had made up her mind, feminine fashion, not to believe what Nina wanted her to believe; but before long she began to find that Nina was mixing truth and fiction with such skill that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other.

The dangers of the social jungle develop remarkable perceptions in deer and bird of paradise, but these defensive instincts are not always proof against the craft of the cat tribe. If they were, the cat tribe would long since have ceased to exist as a species. Other things being equal, the stalker of prey has all the advantage. Nina knew that Jane knew that she was lying. So, to gain her point, she was prepared if necessary to use the simple expedient of *telling the truth*.

Nina was leaning forward, her chin in her hand, her gaze on the rug.

"You've heard, I suppose, this story people are telling about Phil and me," she said in a lower tone.

"No," said Jane in tones of curiosity. "Is it something very dreadful?"

"I'm afraid it is—at least people seem to think it so. It began with an accident to my motor and ended at a Parlor Heater."

"A Parlor Heater! Do go on, Nina. I'm immensely interested."

"Phil and I, on the way home from Egerton's party, you remember? He went home in my motor. I know people thought it awfully rude of us as the other motors were so crowded—but it just happened so and we started home alone—after all the others had gone. We ran out

SMOKE AND FIRE

of oil and had to put up for the night where we could. Unfortunate wasn't it? We were miles from nowhere and not a gallon of gasoline in sight. The farmer seemed to think we were suspicious characters, but he let us in at last to sit beside his stove until morning. I'm sure he was peeping over the balusters most of the time to be sure we didn't make off with the family Bible." Nina laughed at the recollection, a little more loudly than seemed necessary.

"Phil was very sweet about it all. He was so afraid of compromising me, poor fellow. I really felt very sorry for him. The farmer wouldn't volunteer to help us, so Phil wanted to trudge the five miles through the snow to get the oil. But I wouldn't let him. I *couldn't*, Jane. It was frightfully lonely there. The chauffeur was drunk and I was afraid."

"Y—you were quite right," said Jane in a suppressed tone.

Nina glanced at her and went on.

"We sat all night huddled in our furs on opposite sides of that dreadful parlor stove. I don't think I can ever forget it. I've never been so miserable in my life—never! We spoke to each other in monosyllables for a while and at last—er—I went to sleep in disgust. I woke up with a frightful pain in my back from that dreadful chair. What a night! And to think that it was for this—*this*, that Phil and I have been talked about! It's maddening, Jane. If we only had given them a little flame, just a tiny one—for all this smoke! Poor Phil! He was terribly provoked about it this morning. He wants to kill that wretched chauffeur, for of course the whole story came from him. You know, Jane, I discharged him as soon as we got back to town, and this was his revenge. Sweet, wasn't it? It seems as if one

THE SILENT BATTLE

was very much at the mercy of one's mechanician. They're servants, of course, but you can never get them to think that they are. I haven't dared tell father. I don't know what *he* would do about it. I'm afraid——"

Jane Loring had risen and was looking out of the window into the gathering dusk.

"What's the use, Nina?" she asked quietly.

"The use of what?"

"Telling me all this. I understand, I think."

"I hope you do," said Nina quickly. "I wanted you to. That's why I told you."

She got up and took a few rapid paces forward.

"Jane!" she cried suddenly. "What do you mean? That I—you believe—? Oh, how could you?"

She stood a moment, her face hidden in her hands, as though the horror of it all had just come to her.

Jane Loring faced around calmly, her face grave.

"What difference does it make what I believe?" she asked.

Nina looked at her a long while, then dropped her gaze, turned away and picked up her accessories. Her mission here was ended.

"I'm sorry. I seem to have misjudged you—your friendship."

"Yes," said Jane. "I think perhaps you have."

Nina moved toward the door, and Jane, motionless, watched her. She did not speak again—nor did Jane; and in a moment the door closed between them—for the last time.

Nina was smiling when she entered her machine, but Jane climbed the stairs wearily.

XXIII

THE MOUSE AND THE LION

THERE was an activity in the offices of Kenyon, Hood and Gallatin chiefly centering around the doings of the youngest member of the firm which had caused the methodical Tooker some skeptical and unquiet moments. He had witnessed these spurts of industry before and remembered that they had always presaged the bursting of a bubble and the disappearance of the junior partner for a protracted period, at the end of which he would return to the office, pale, nervous and depressed. But as the weeks went by, far beyond the time usually marked for this event, Tooker began to realize that something unusual had happened. The chief clerk could hardly be called an observant man, for his business in life kept him in a narrow groove, but he awoke one morning to the discovery that a remarkable change had taken place in the manner and bearing of Mr. Gallatin. There were none of those fidgety movements of the fingers, that quick and sometimes overbearing speech, or the habit Mr. Gallatin had had (as his father had had it before him) of pacing up and down the floor of his room, his hands behind his back, his brows bent over sullen eyes. Mr. Gallatin's manner and speech were quieter, his gaze more direct and more lasting. He smiled more, and his capacity for work seemed unlimited. Tooker waited for a long while, and then came to the conclusion that a

THE SILENT BATTLE

new order of things had begun and that the junior partner had found himself.

There had been frequent important conferences in Mr. Kenyon's office between the partners during which Philip Gallatin had advised the firm of the progress of the Sanborn case, but it was clear that for the present at least the junior partner dominated the situation. All his life Tooker had been accustomed to follow in the footsteps of others, and was prepared to follow Gallatin gladly, if the junior partner would give him footsteps to follow. And he was now beginning to appreciate the significance of those long visits of Mr. Gallatin in Pennsylvania, and the infinite care and study with which Gallatin had fortified himself. He understood, too, what those piles of documents on Mr. Gallatin's desk were for, and in the conferences of the firm, when John Kenyon's incisive voice cut in, he realized that it was more often in encouragement, advice, and appreciation, than in contention or argument.

The Sanborn Company's directors were represented by the firm of Whitehead, Leuppold, Tyson and Leuppold. This was one of the firms previously mentioned which had offices upon an upper floor and included among its clients many large corporations closely identified with "The Interests." A correspondence had been passing between Mr. Gallatin and Mr. Leuppold with all of which Tooker was familiar. Mr. Gallatin's early letters stated that he hoped for a conference with Mr. Loring. Mr. Leuppold's first replies were couched in polite formulas, the equivalent of which was, in plain English, that Mr. Gallatin might go to the devil, saying that Mr. Loring had nothing to do with the matter. Mr. Gallatin's reply ignored this suggestion, and again proposed a conference. Mr. Leuppold refused in abrupt terms. Mr. Gallatin gave

THE MOUSE AND THE LION

reasons for his request. Mr. Leuppold couldn't see them. Mr. Gallatin patiently gave other reasons. Mr. Leuppold ignored this letter. Mr. Gallatin wrote another. Mr. Leuppold in reply considered the matter closed. Mr. Gallatin considered the matter just opened. Mr. Leuppold fulminated politely and satirically suggested intimidation. Mr. Gallatin regretted Mr. Leuppold's implication but persisted, giving, as his reasons, the discovery of material evidence.

The next day Mr. Leuppold came in person, was shown into Mr. Gallatin's office and Tooker had been present at the interview. It had been a memorable occasion. Mr. Leuppold wore that suave and confident manner for which he was noted and Gallatin received him with an old-fashioned courtesy and the deference of a younger man for an older, which left nothing to be desired. Accepting this as his due, Leuppold began in a fatherly way to impress upon Gallatin the utter futility of trying to win the injunction in the Court of Appeals. The contentions of Sanborn *et al.* had no basis either in law or in equity. Mr. Gallatin had doubtless been unduly influenced by doubtful precedents. He, Leuppold, was familiar with every phase of the case and had defended the previous suit which had been brought and lost by a legal firm in Philadelphia. There was absolutely nothing in Mr. Gallatin's position as stated in his correspondence and he concluded by referring "his young friend" to certain marked passages in a volume which he had brought in under his arm. Gallatin read the passages through with interest and listened with a show of great seriousness to Mr. Leuppold's interpretation of them. Mr. Leuppold had a mien which commanded attention. Gallatin gave it, but he said little in reply which could indicate his possible ground of action, except to express regret that Mr. Leuppold's clients had

THE SILENT BATTLE

taken such an intolerant view of his own client's claims and to deplore the unfortunate tone of Mr. Leuppold's own letter of some days ago.

When it was quite clear to Mr. Leuppold that the young man was not to be moved by persuasion, his manner changed.

"I have done my best, Mr. Gallatin," he said irritably, "to prove to you the utter futility of your course. My clients have nothing to fear. I am only trying to save them the expense of further litigation. But if you insist on bringing this case to trial, we will welcome the opportunity to show further evidence in our possession. We have been content for the sake of peace to let matters go on as they have been going, but if this suit is pressed, I warn you that it will be unfortunate for your clients."

"I hope not. I hope we won't have to bring suit," replied Gallatin easily. "I'm only asking for a conference of all the parties interested, Mr. Leuppold. That certainly is little enough, an amicable conference, a discussion—if you like—"

"There is nothing to discuss."

"I beg to differ. Leaving aside for a moment the question of the new evidence in the Sanborn case, do you think that Mr. Loring, who controls its stock, would care to have his connection with the Lehigh and Pottsville Railroad Company brought into court?"

Mr. Leuppold gasped. He couldn't help it. How and where had this polite but surprising young man obtained this information, which no member of his own firm besides himself possessed. It was uncanny. Was this the fellow they had talked about and smiled over upstairs? Mr. Leuppold took to cover skillfully, hiding his uneasiness under a bland smile.

"You're dreaming, sir," he said.

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THE MOUSE AND THE LION

Gallatin shook his head.

“No, I’m not dreaming.”

Gallatin rose and took a few paces up and down the room. “See here, Mr. Leuppold, I’m not prepared to discuss the matter further now. I’ve asked you for a conference and you call my request intimidation—which might mean a much uglier thing. You’ve treated my correspondence in a casual way and you’ve patronized me in my own office. I’ve kept my temper pretty well, and I’m keeping it still; but I warn you that you have been and still are making a mistake. I’ve asked for a conference because I believe this matter can be settled out of court, and because I didn’t think it fair to your client to go to court without giving him a chance to save himself. We have no desire to enter into a long and expensive litigation, but we are prepared to do so and will take the preliminary steps at once, unless we have some immediate consideration of our claims. If you stand suit on this appeal you will lose, and I fancy the evidence presented will be of such character that you will not care to take the matter further. Don’t reply now, Mr. Leuppold. Think it over and let me hear from you in writing.”

Mr. Leuppold had not moved. He was watching Gallatin keenly from under his beetling brows. Was this mere guess work? What did the young man really know? What evidence had he? Was it a bluff? If so, he made it in tones with which Leuppold was unfamiliar. But it was no time to back water now. He smiled approvingly at Phil Gallatin’s inkwell.

“Mr. Gallatin, your imagination does you credit. A good lawyer must have intuition. But he’s got to have discretion, too. You think, because the interests we represent are wealthy ones, that you can throw a stick in our direction and be sure of hitting something. Unfortunately

THE SILENT BATTLE

you have been misinformed—on all points. Mr. Loring has voluntarily submitted his holdings in Pennsylvania to investigation. You can never prove any connection between the Pequot Coal Company and the Lehigh and Pottsville Railroad. There is none."

He rose pompously and took up his hat and books.

"There isn't any use in our talking over this case. It will lead us nowhere. But I'll promise you if you'll put your proposition in writing to submit it to careful consideration."

"Thanks," said Gallatin dryly. He picked a large envelope up from the table and handed it to his visitor. "I have already done so. Will you take it with you or shall I mail it?"

"I—you may give it to me, Mr. Gallatin."

Gallatin walked to the outer door and politely bowed him out, while Tooker, his thin frame writhing with ecstasy, fussed with some papers on the big table in the junior partner's office until he was more composed, and then went on about his daily routine. He realized now for the first time the full stature of the junior partner. In a night, it almost seemed to Tooker, he had outgrown his boyhood, his brilliant wayward boyhood that had promised so much and achieved so little. He was like his father now, but there was a difference. Philip Gallatin, the elder, he remembered, had dominated his office by the mere force of his intellect. He had directed the preparation of his cases with an unerring legal sense and he had won them through his mastery of detail and the elimination of the unessential. But it was when presenting his case to a jury that he was at his strongest, for such was the personal quality of his magnetism that jurors were willing to be convinced less by the value of his cause than by the magic of his sophistry. But to Tooker, who was little

THE MOUSE AND THE LION

more than a piece of legal machinery, there was something in the methods of the son which compensated for the more spectacular talents of the father, the painstaking and diligent way in which Gallatin had planned and carried out his present investigations and the confidence with which he was putting his information to use. It was clear to Tooker that Leuppold had been unprepared for Philip Gallatin's revelations. Even now Tooker doubted the wisdom of them, for Mr. Leuppold would not be slow to take advantage of his information and to cover the traces left by his clients as well as he might. But when he spoke of it to Gallatin, the junior partner had laughed.

"Don't you bother, old man. Wait a while. We'll hear from Mr. Leuppold very soon—before the week is out, I think."

In the offices upstairs, Mr. Leuppold's return was the signal for an immediate consultation of the entire firm, which would have flattered and encouraged Philip Gallatin had he been aware of it. Mr. Tyson and Mr. Whitehead discovered in Mr. Leuppold's account of the interview undue cause for alarm. They were themselves adepts in the game Mr. Gallatin was evidently playing and could be depended upon at the proper moment to out-manuever him. Mr. Leuppold disagreed and was forced to admit the weakness of Mr. Loring's position, if, as he suspected, Mr. Gallatin had succeeded in fortifying himself with the proper evidence. The stock was, of course, not in Mr. Loring's name, but a man of resource might have been able to find means to establish a legal connection of the mine with the railroad. Mr. Leuppold's opinions usually bore weight, but just now he seemed to have no definite opinions.

The conference of the partners lasted until late in the afternoon, during which time messengers came and went

THE SILENT BATTLE

between the firm's offices and those of the Pequot Coal Company and that of the President of the L. and P. Henry K. Loring was out of town and would not return until the end of the week. A wire was sent to him to return to New York at once, and it was decided that no reply to Mr. Gallatin's letter should be sent until Mr. Loring had been advised.

Phil Gallatin, in high good humor, lunched that morning with the senior partner at a fashionable restaurant uptown. His work on the Sanborn case was finished. He had been at it very hard for two months, and the two of them had planned to spend the afternoon and following day up at John Kenyon's farm in Westchester, where they would do some riding, some walking and some resting, of which both were in need. The lunch was a preliminary luxury and they found a table in a corner on the Avenue and ordered.

There was no talk of office matters. John Kenyon had been thoroughly advised of Phil's work and knew that there was nothing in the way of suggestion or advice that he could offer. He had noticed for some days the gaunt look in his young partner's face. There were indications of his growing maturity and shadows of the struggle through which he had passed, but there were marks which John Kenyon knew belonged to a different kind of trouble. Gallatin had told him what had happened in the woods and Kenyon had learned something of Phil's romance in New York. But Kenyon was not given to idle or curious questioning, and he knew that when Phil was ready to speak of private matters he would do so.

Their oysters had been served and their planked fish brought when a fashionable party entered and was conducted by the head waiter to an adjoining table which



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THE MOUSE AND THE LION

had been decorated for the occasion. Mrs. Pennington led the way, followed by Miss Ledyard, Mrs. Perrine and Miss Loring. Behind them followed Ogden Spencer, Bibby Worthington, Colonel Broadhurst and Coleman Van Duyn, who was, it appeared, the host.

Phil had hoped that his presence might pass unnoticed; but Nellie Pennington espied him and nodded gayly, so that he had to rise and greet her. This drew the eyes of others and when the party was seated he discovered that Miss Loring, on Van Duyn's right, was seated facing him and that her eyes after one blank look in his direction were assiduously turned elsewhere. John Kenyon caught the change in Gallatin's expression, but in a moment Phil had resumed their conversation upon the comparative merits of the Delaware River and Potomac River shad, and their luncheon went on to its conclusion. But the spirits of John Kenyon's guest had fallen, and Kenyon's most persuasive stories failed to find a response. In spite of himself Phil Gallatin found himself looking at Jane and thinking of Arcadia. It was three weeks now since that much to be remembered and regretted interview at the Loring house had taken place. The glance he stole at Jane assured him that if he had ever had a hope of reconciliation, the chances for it were now more remote than ever. She wore a huge hat which screened her effectually, and the glimpses he had of her face showed it dimpling in smiles for Coleman Van Duyn or Bibby Worthington, who sat on either side of her. When their eyes had first met he had thought her pale, but as the moments passed a warm color mounted her cheeks. It seemed to Gallatin that never before within his memory had she ever appeared so care-free. She was youth untrammelled, a sister to Euphrosyne, the spirit of joy. It seemed as if she realized that the grim specter which had stolen into her life for a

THE SILENT BATTLE

while had been exorcised away, and that she had already forgotten it in the beckoning of the jocund hours. Phil Gallatin had come into her life and gone, leaving no trace in her mind or in her heart.

After this their eyes met but once. He was looking at her, thinking of these things, oblivious of what John Kenyon was saying, unaware of the intentness of his gaze, which at last compelled her to look in his direction. It was a startled glance that she gave him, wide-eyed, almost fearful, as though he had challenged her to this silent combat. Then her lids lowered insolently, her chin lifted and she turned aside.

Their coffee had been served. Phil gulped his down hastily. "Come, Uncle John," he said hoarsely. "Let's get out of this, will you?"

John Kenyon paid the check and they rose. Unfortunately the only path to the door lay by Mr. Van Duyn's table, and as Gallatin passed, nodding to his acquaintances, Mrs. Pennington got up and stood in front of him.

"I do so want to see you for a moment, Phil. Will you excuse me, Coley?" she said, and led the way into a room where she found an unoccupied corner. John Kenyon went elsewhere to smoke his cigar.

"Oh, Phil!" she whispered. "Why wouldn't you come to see me? I've had so much to talk to you about."

"I—I've been very busy, Nellie. I haven't been anywhere."

"My house isn't 'anywhere.' I want to talk to you—you know what I mean."

"It won't do any good, Nellie," he muttered. "There isn't anything more to be said."

"Perhaps not—but I want to say it just the same. I want you to promise——"

THE MOUSE AND THE LION

"I can't," he said hoarsely. "Don't ask me to come and talk to you—about that."

"Well, then, come and talk to me about other things."

"I can't. If I come I must talk about what you remind me of."

She hesitated, looking at him critically.

"Phil, you're an idiot," she said at last.

"Thanks," he replied, "I'm aware of it."

"Are you going to give up?"

"I've given up."

Nellie Pennington shrugged. "For good? You're going to let—Oh, I've no patience with you."

"I'm sorry. You did what you could and I'm thankful. Don't think I'm ungrateful. I'm not. One of these days I'll prove it. You did a lot. I'm awake, Nellie. You woke me and I'm not going to sleep again."

"I'm proud of you, Phil, but you're not awake—not really awake or you couldn't sit by and see the girl you love forced into an engagement with a man she doesn't care for."

Gallatin flushed.

"Is that—" he asked slowly, "is that what this—this luncheon means?"

"Judge for yourself. He is with her always. And they've even rebelled against my chaperonage. Their relations are talked of freely in Jane's presence and she laughs acquiescence. Imagine it!"

Gallatin turned away.

"I—I have no further interest in—in Miss Loring," he said quietly.

"Well, I have. And I'm not going to let her make a fool of herself if I can help it."

"Miss Loring will probably not agree with you."

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I hardly expect her to." She hesitated. "Phil," she asked at last.

"What, Nellie?"

"Will you answer a question?"

"What?"

"Was this story they're telling about you and Nina mentioned?"

"Yes, it was."

"I thought so," triumphantly. "Phil we must talk this thing out."

"It can do no good——"

"And no harm. There's been a mistake somewhere—something neither you nor I understand." She stopped and tapped her forehead with her index finger. "I can't tell what—but I sense it—here. Something has gone wrong—what, I don't know. I've got to think about it."

"Yes—it's gone wrong—and it can't be righted."

"Perhaps not," she said rising. "But I *do* want you to come to see me. Won't you?"

"You're very persistent, aren't you? Very well, I'll come."

"I must go now. Coley will be furious. I hope so, at any rate."

She smiled at him again and went back to her luncheon party while Gallatin found John Kenyon and drove to the Grand Central station.

XXIV

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

IT was the middle of March, and fashionable New York, having been at least twice through its winter wardrobe, had gone southward for a change of speed. Aiken, Jekyl Island and Palm Beach had all done their share in the midwinter rejuvenation, but the particular set of people with which this story concerns itself were spending the last days of the Lenten season at the Dorsey-Martin's place in Virginia.

Dorsey-Martin was rich beyond the dreams of Alnaschar, but unlike the unfortunate brother of the barber, had not smashed the glassware in his basket until he had sold it to somebody else, when he was enabled to buy it in again at a much reduced rate. His particular specialty was not glassware, but railroads which, while equally fragile, could be put together again and be made (to all appearances) as good as new.

The fruits of this fortunate talent were in evidence in his well-appointed house in New York with its collection of old English portraits, his palace at Newport just finished, and in his "shooting place" in Virginia.

The Dorsey-Martins had "arrived." They had been ten years in transit, and their ways had been devious, but their present welcome more than compensated for the pains and money which had been spent in the pilgrimage. The Virginia place, "Clovelly" adjoined that of the Ledyards, and consisted of a thousand acres of preserved woodland and dale, within a night's journey of New York.

THE SILENT BATTLE

Autumn, of course, was the season when "Clovelly" was most in use, but spring frequently found it the scene of gay gatherings such as the present one, for in addition to the squash courts and swimming pool there was court tennis, with a marker constantly in attendance, a good stable, and hospitable neighbors.

It was Nellie Pennington who had prevailed upon Phil Gallatin to accept Mrs. Dorsey-Martin's invitation, for she knew that Jane Loring was staying at "Mobjack," the Ledyards' place, and she hoped that she might yet be the means of bringing the two together. Her interview with Phil had been barren of results, except to confirm her in the suspicion that Nina Jaffray held the key to the puzzle. Nina, who had been one of the early arrivals at "Clovelly," had so far eluded all her snares; and Nellie Pennington was now convinced that here was a foeman worthy of her subtlest metal. She enjoyed the game hugely, as, apparently, did Nina, and their passages at arms were as skillful (and as ineffectual) as those of two perfectly matched *maîtres d'escrime*. Nina knew that Nellie Pennington suspected her of mischief, but she also knew that it was unlikely that any one would ever know, unless from Jane, just what that mischief had been.

The arrival of Phil Gallatin, while it gave Nina happiness, made her keep a narrower guard against the verbal thrusts of her playful adversary.

Phil Gallatin had regained his poise and reached "Clovelly" in a jubilant frame of mind. Two days ago Henry K. Loring had agreed to a conference.

Mr. Leuppold, more suave, more benign, more patronizing than ever, had called and told Gallatin of this noteworthy act of condescension on the part of his client. Nothing, of course, need be expected from such a meeting in the way of concessions, but men of the world like Mr.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

Leuppold and Mr. Gallatin knew that co-operation was, after all, the soul of business, and that one caught many more flies with treacle than with vinegar.

He continued for half an hour in this vein, platitudinizing and begging the question at issue while Gallatin listened and assented politely, without giving any further intimation of a course of action for Kenyon, Hood and Gallatin. But when the great lawyer had departed, Gallatin went to the window and surveyed the steel gray waters of the Hudson with a gleaming eye, and his face wore a smile which would not depart. Sanborn's case would never go to court.

The vestiges of this good humor still remained upon his face and in his demeanor all the morning, which had been spent in a run with the Warrenton pack. It was so long since he had ridden to hounds that he had almost forgotten the joy of it, but he was well mounted and finished creditably. Nina Jaffray showed the field her heels for most of the way and Gallatin pounded after her, his muscles aching, determined not to be outridden by a woman.

In the first check, she drew her horse alongside of his and smiled at him.

"Ready to let me announce it yet, Phil?" she asked.

Gallatin just then was wondering whether his leg grip would last out the day.

"Announce what, Nina?" he asked.

"Our engagement," she returned with a smile. "It's almost time, you know."

"Oh, go as far as you like."

"Don't laugh!"

"I've got to—you make me so happy."

"Oh, you can joke if you like now, but you'll have to marry me some day."

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Oh, will I? Why?"

"Because you like me. Friendship subdues even Time, Phil. I'm willing to wait."

And when he looked at her, at loss for a reply, the hounds gave tongue again and they were off at a full gallop. He couldn't help admiring her this morning. The easy unconventionality of her speech, her attitude of good fellowship, were a part of the setting. This was the scene in which she always appeared to the best advantage and she took the center of the stage with an assurance which showed how well she knew her lines.

It was Nina's brush, of course, for she had brought down her own best hunter for the occasion and was in at the death with the Huntsman and Master of the Hounds, while Gallatin trailed in with the Field. And in the ride homeward Phil found himself jogging along comfortably at Nina's side.

"Phil," she said again, when the others had ridden on ahead. "I hope you won't laugh at me any more. It's indecent. I never laugh at you."

"Oh, don't you? You're never doing anything else."

"It seems so, doesn't it? That's my pose, Phil. I'm really very much in earnest about things. I don't suppose I ever could learn to love anybody—the faculty is lacking, somehow; but I think you know that, even if I didn't love you, I'd never love any one else, whatever happened, and I'd be true as Death."

"Yes, I know that. But——"

"But—?" she repeated.

"But—I'm not going to marry," he laughed.

She shrugged.

"Oh, yes, you will—some day."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because men of your type always do."

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

"My type?"

"Yes, they usually marry late and beneath them. I'm trying to save you from that mistake."

He smiled at her saucy profile.

"Marrying one's equal doesn't always mean equality."

"You were always a dreamer, Phil."

"I think I'll always dream then, Nina," he broke in abruptly. "Don't make the mistake of thinking that you've got to marry somebody—anybody—just because you've reached the marriageable age. That's the trap that catches most of us. Marry for love, Nina. You've got that much capital to begin on. Love doesn't die a sudden death."

"Not unless it's killed. That happens, you know."

"You can't kill it easily. You may scoff at it, deny it, wound it, but it doesn't die, Nina."

She turned and examined him narrowly, then shifted her bridle to the other hand and ran her crop along her horse's neck.

"You know, Jane Loring is going to marry Coley."

"What has that to do with what we're talking about?" he said quickly.

"Oh, nothing. Only I thought you'd like to know it. You'll have a chance to congratulate them to-night."

"To-night? Where?"

"They're at the Ledyards', but they're dining at 'Clovelly.'"

"Oh!"

"So, if you're going to put them asunder, you'd better do it to-night or forever hold your peace."

He smiled around at her calmly.

"Nothing doing, Nina. You missed it that time. The only things I'm putting asunder are a railroad and

THE SILENT BATTLE

an omnivorous coal company. That takes about all my energy."

"Phil," she put in thoughtfully after a moment.

"What?"

"What's the use of waiting? You're going to marry me in the end, you know."

"Oh, am I?"

"Yes. You can't afford to refuse. I've got the money, position, and father has influence. That means power for a man of your ability. You're getting ambitious. I can tell that by the way you're sticking at things. There's no telling what you mightn't accomplish with the help I can bring you. Oh, you could get along alone, of course. But you'd waste a lot of time. You'd better think about it seriously."

"I have thought about it. I'm really beginning to believe you mean it."

"Yes, I do mean it. I've decided to marry you. And you know I've never yet failed at anything I've undertaken."

She was quite in earnest and he looked at her amusedly.

"Then I suppose I'd better surrender at discretion."

"Yes, I'm sure you had."

"Isn't there a loophole?"

"None, whatever. I'm your super-man, Phil. You might just as well go at once and order your wedding garments and the ring. It will save us endless discussions—and you know I *hate* discussions. They're really very wearing. Besides, O Phil!"—She laid the end of her crop on his arm—"just think what a lot of fun you'll get out of letting Jane know how little you care!"

Gallatin didn't reply and in a moment they had

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

reached the stables of "Clovelly" where the others were dismounting.

In his room, to which he had gone in search of his pipe, Gallatin paused at the window, looking out over the winter landscape, thinking. Why not? Why shouldn't he marry her? It would be a cold-blooded business, of course, but he called to mind a dozen marriages of reason that had turned out satisfactorily, and as many marriages for love which had ended in the ditch. This life was a pleasant kind of poison, the luxury and ease, the careless gayety of these pleasant people who moved along the line of least resistance, taking from life only what suited their moods, living only for the moment, sure that the future was amply provided for. He had turned his back on this world for a while, and had lived in another, a sterner world, with which this one had little in common. A place like this might be his, with its broad acres and stables, horses and motor cars, a life like this for the asking. A marriage of reason! With Nina Jaffray at the helm of his destiny and hers. God forbid!

He had laid his own course now, but he had weathered the rocks and shoals and the rough water in sight did not dismay him. Marriage! He wanted none of it with Nina or any other. This kind of life was not for him unless he won it for himself, for only then would he be fit to live it. And while he found it good to be away from his rooms in the house in — Street, good to be away from the office for a while, the atmosphere of "Clovelly" was redolent of his early days of indolence and undesire and he suddenly found himself less tolerant of the failings of these people than he had ever been before. He hadn't realized what his work had meant until he had this idleness to compare it with.

THE SILENT BATTLE

Jane! He had been able to think less of Jane Loring in the fever of work, but here at "Clovelly," among the people they both knew, where her name was frequently mentioned, he found it less easy to forget her, and the imminence of the hour when he must see her again gave him a qualm.

He lighted his pipe and started downstairs toward the gunroom, where the guests were recounting the adventures of the morning over tobacco and high-balls. Nellie Pennington, who had an instinct for the psychological moment, met him and led him to a lounge at the end of the hall.

"Well," she said, "are you prepared to give a full account of yourself?"

"An empty account, dear Mother Confessor. I'm neither sinful nor virtuous."

"I'm not so sure about that."

"About which?"

"About either. You're unpleasantly self-righteous and criminally unamiable."

"Oh, Nellie, to whom?"

"To me. Also, you're stupid!"

"Thanks. That's my misfortune. What else?"

"That's enough to begin on. I could pull your ears in chagrin. You've treated my advice with the scantest ceremony, made ducks and drakes of the opportunities I've provided, and lastly you've gone and gotten Nina Jaffray talked about——"

"Nellie! Please! I can't permit——"

"Oh, fudge, Phil. Nina is well able to look after herself. It isn't of Nina I'm thinking."

"Who then?"

"You! You silly goose. There isn't any spectacle in the world half so ludicrous as a chivalrous man defending

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

the fame of a woman who doesn't care whether she's defended or not."

"I don't see——"

"I know you don't. That's why I'm telling you."

"But Nina does care."

"Yes, but not precisely in the way that you suppose. Fortune gave her some excellent cards—and she played them."

"Please be more explicit."

"Very well, then. Girls of Nina's type would rather have their name coupled unpleasantly with that of the man they care for than not coupled with it at all."

"Nonsense, Nina doesn't care——"

"Oh, yes, she does. She wants to marry you. She has told you so, hasn't she?"

Phil Gallatin looked at her quickly with eyes agog. Such powers of divination were uncanny.

"She has proposed to you once—twice—how many times, Phil?"

"None—not at all," he stammered, while she smiled and shrugged her incredulity.

"If I didn't know already, I need only a glance at your face to be convinced of it."

"How did you know?"

"How does a woman know anything? By virtue, my friend, of those invisible spiritual fibers which she thrusts in all directions and upon which she receives impressions. That's how she knows."

"You guessed?"

"Call it that, if you like. I guessed. I guessed this, also: that Nina wanted Jane to believe this story to be true. It didn't need much to convince her. That little Nina was willing to provide."

"What?"

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Nina admitted that the story was true," she repeated.

Gallatin rose to his feet and stared at his companion like one possessed.

"Nina admitted it! You're dreaming."

"No. I'm very wide awake. I wish you were."

"It's preposterous. Whatever put such an idea into your head?"

"My antennæ."

"Nonsense!"

"Listen. Nina called on Jane a while ago. They had a long talk. Something happened—something that has interrupted friendly relations. They don't speak now. What do you suppose that talk was about? The weather? Or a plan for the amelioration of the condition of homeless cats? Oh, you know a lot about women, Phil Gallatin!" she finished scornfully.

"I know enough," he muttered.

"You think you do," she put in quickly. "The Lord give me patience to talk to you! For unbiased ignorance, next to the callous youth who thinks he knows it all, commend me to the modern Galahad! The one only *thinks* he knows, but the other doesn't want to know. He's content to believe every woman irreproachable by the mere virtue of being a woman. Nina Jaffray has played her cards with remarkable cleverness, but she has been quite unscrupulous. It's time you knew it, and it's time that Jane did. I would tell her if I thought she would believe me, but I fancy I've meddled enough."

Gallatin took two or three paces up and down and then sat down beside her.

"It isn't meddling, Nellie," he said quietly. "You've done your best and I'm grateful to you. Unfortunately, you can't help me any longer. It's too late. I did what I

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

could. No girl who had ever loved a man could let him go so easily, could doubt him so willingly. It was all a mistake. It's better to find it out now than too late."

Nellie Pennington didn't reply. She only looked down at her muddy boots with the cryptic smile that women wear when they wish to conceal either their ignorance or their wisdom.

"Did you know that Jane was dining here to-night?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "Nina told me. I'm sorry."

"It doesn't matter in the least. The world is big enough for everybody. Jane evidently thinks so, too. Otherwise she wouldn't be coming."

"Does she know I'm here?"

"Oh, yes, she knows that Nina is, too."

Gallatin looked out of the window.

"You don't understand women, do you, Phil? Admit that and I'll tell you why she's coming."

He smiled. "I do admit it. You're all in league with the devil."

"She's coming here because she wants to show you how little she cares, because she has a morbid curiosity to see you and Nina together, and lastly," at this she leaned toward him with her lips very close to his ear, "and lastly—because she loves you more madly than ever!"

He had hardly recovered from the shock of surprise at this announcement when he realized that Nellie Pennington had suddenly risen and fled.

This preliminary step taken, Nellie Pennington retreated upstairs in the most amiable of moods, to dress for luncheon. If Nina was going to play the game with marked cards, it was quite proper that Phil be permitted the use of the code. She had at least provided him with

THE SILENT BATTLE

food for reflection, which, while not quite pleasant to take, would serve as nutrition for his failing optimism. And somewhere in the back of her head a plan was being born, unpalpable as yet and formless, but which persisted in growing in spite of her.

XXV

DEEP WATER

THE afternoon was passed in leisurely fashion. The modern way of entertaining guests is to let them entertain themselves. They loafed, smoked, played bottle-pool and later on there was a court tennis match between young Dorsey-Martin and the marker, which drew a gallery and applause. Nina Jaffray tried it next with Bibby Worthington and though she had played but once, got the knack of the "railroad" service and succeeded in beating him handily, amid derisive remarks for Bibby from the nets. A plunge in the pool followed; after which the ladies went up for a rest before dressing for dinner. Gallatin saw little of Nellie Pennington during the afternoon, and though he wanted to question her to satisfy the alarming curiosity which she had aroused, she avoided speaking to him alone, and when he insisted on following her about, fled to her room. She knew the effect of her revelations upon his mind and she didn't propose that it should be spoiled by an anti-climax.

The dinner hour arrived and with it the Ledyards and their house-guests, Angela Wetherill, Millicent Reeves, the Perrines, Jane Loring, Percy Endicott, Coleman Van Duyn and some of the Warrenton folk. Dinner tables, each with six chairs, had been laid in the dining-room and hall, but so perfect was the machinery of the great establishment that the influx of guests made no apparent difference in its orderly procedure. There were good-natured

THE SILENT BATTLE

comments on Bibby Worthington's defeat in the afternoon, congratulations for Nina Jaffray on her dual achievement, uncomplimentary remarks about Virginia clay, flattering ones about Virginia hospitality and the usual discussion about breeds of hounds and horses, back of which was to be discovered the ancient rivalry between the Cedarcroft and Apawomeck hunt clubs.

Nellie Pennington directed the destinies of the table at which Gallatin sat. Nina Jaffray was on his right, Larry Kane beyond her, Coleman Van Duyn on Mrs. Pennington's left and Jane Loring opposite. Nothing could possibly have been arranged which could conspire more thoroughly to lacerate the feelings of those assembled. Gallatin saw Jane halt when she was directed to her seat, he heard Nina's titter of delight beside him, caught Larry Kane's glare and Coley Van Duyn's flush, but the stab of Jane's eyes hardened him into an immediate gayety in which Nina was not slow to follow. Mrs. Pennington having devised the situation, calmly sat and proceeded to enjoy it. Good breeding, she knew, made a fair amalgam of the most heterogeneous elements, but she gave a short sigh when they were all seated and each began talking rapidly to his neighbor, Jane to Larry Kane, Nina to Phil and herself to Coley. Pangs in every heart except her own! It was the perfection of social cruelty, and she enjoyed it hugely, aware that two, perhaps three, of the persons at the table might never care to speak to her again, but stimulated by the reflection, whether for bad or good, something must come out of her crucible. The first shock of dismay over, it was apparent that her dinner partners had decided to make the best of the situation. The table was small, and general conversation inevitable, but she chose for the present to let matters take their course, trusting to Nina to provide

DEEP WATER

that element of uncertainty which was to make the plot of her comedy fruitful.

Indeed, Nina seemed in her element, and, when a sudden silence fell, broke the ice with a carelessness which showed her quite oblivious of its existence.

"So nice of you, Nellie, to have us all together! I was just saying to Phil that dinners at small tables can be *such* a bore, if the people are not all congenial."

"Jolly, isn't it?" laughed Nellie. "Jane, why weren't you hunting this morning?"

"Oh, Coley didn't want to," she said quickly, her rapier flashing in two directions.

Nellie Pennington understood.

"You *are* getting heavy, aren't you, Coley?" she asked sweetly. "Didn't Honora have anything up to your weight?"

"I didn't ask," returned Van Duyn peevishly. "Dreadful bore, huntin'—"

"Hear the man!" exclaimed Nellie. "You're spoiling him, Jane."

"There's no hope for any creature who doesn't like hunting," put in Nina in disgust.

"Except the fox," said Gallatin.

"And there's not much for him when Nina rides," laughed Larry Kane. "Lord, Nina, but you did take some chances to-day."

"I believe in taking chances," put in Miss Jaffray calmly. "The element of uncertainty is all that makes life worth while. Nothing in the world is so deadly as the obvious."

"You'll be kept busy avoiding it," sighed Nellie. "I've been."

"Oh, I simply ignore it," she returned, with a quick gesture. "Jane won't approve, of course; but the un-

THE SILENT BATTLE

usual, the daring, the unconventional are the only things that interest me at all."

"They interest others when you do them, Nina," Jane replied smiling calmly.

"Of course, they do. And you ought to be grateful."

"We are. I'm sure we'd be very dull without you. Personally I'm a bromide."

"Heaven forbid! The things that are easiest are not worth trying for. Whether your game is fish, fowl or beast (and that includes man), try the most difficult. The thrill of delight when you bag your game is worth all the pains of the effort. Isn't it, Nellie?"

"I don't know," the other replied, between oysters. "I bagged Dick, but then I didn't have to try very hard. I suppose I would have bagged him just the same. A woman can have any man she wants, you know."

"The trouble is," laughed Larry Kane, "that she doesn't know what she wants."

"And, if she does, Larry," said Gallatin slowly, "he's usually the wrong one."

Nina laughed.

"His sex must be blamed for that. The right men are all wrong and the wrong men are all right. That's my experience. 'Young saint, old devil; young devil, old saint.' You couldn't provide me with a better recommendation for a good husband than a bad reputation as a bachelor. And think of the calm delights of regeneration!"

"You'll have no difficulty in finding him, Nina," said Jane.

"I'm afraid there's no hope for me," laughed Kane. "I, for one, am too good for any use."

"Too good to be true," sniffed Nina.

DEEP WATER

“Or too true to be interesting,” he added, below his breath.

Nellie Pennington, having led her companions into deep water, now turned and guided them into the shoals of the commonplace. Jane Loring's eyes and Phil Gallatin's had met across the table. The act was unavoidable for they sat directly opposite each other and, though each looked away at once, the current established, brief as it was, was burdened with meaning. Gallatin read a hundred things, but love was not one of them. Jane read a hundred things any one of which might have been love, but, as far as she knew, was not. Gallatin caught the end of a gaze she had given him while he was talking to Nina, and he fancied it to be a kind of indignant curiosity, not in the slightest degree related to the scorn of her surprise at being detected in the midst of her inspection. Gallatin found her face thinner, which made her eyes seem larger and the shadows under them deeper. He had seen fresh young beauty such as hers break and fade during one season in New York, but it shocked him a little to find these marks so evident in so short a time. It was as though a year, two years even, had been crowded into the few weeks since he had seen her last, as though she had lived at high tension, letting nothing escape her that could add to the sum of experience. Her eyes sparkled, and on her cheeks was a patch of red clearly defined, like rouge, but not rouge, for it came and went with her humor. She had grown older, more intense, more fragile, her features more clearly carved, more refined and—except for the hard little shadows at the corners of her lips—more spiritual.

He glanced at the heavy, bovine face of Coley Van Duyn beside her and wondered. Coley had been drinking freely and his face was flushed, his laugh open-mouthed and louder than Nellie Pennington's humor seemed to war-

THE SILENT BATTLE

rant. How could she? God! How could she do it?

A blind rage came upon Gallatin, a sudden wave of intolerance and rebellion, and he clenched his fists beneath the table. This man drank as much as he liked and when he pleased. He was the club glutton. He ate immoderately and drank immoderately, because he liked to do it, and because that was his notion of comfort. Not, as had been the case with Gallatin, because he had not been able to live without it. Van Duyn could stop drinking when he liked, when he had had enough, when he didn't want any more. He drank for the mere pleasure of drinking. Gallatin bit his lip and stared at his untouched wine glasses. Pleasure? With Gallatin it had been no pleasure. It had been a medicine, a desperate remedy for a desperate pain, a poisonous medicine which cured and killed at the same time.

"Phil!" Nina's voice sounded suddenly at his ear. "Are you ill?"

"Not in the least."

"You haven't listened to a word I've been saying, and it was so interesting."

He laughed.

"What were you thinking of?"

"My sins."

"Then I don't wonder that you looked so badly."

But it was clear that she understood him, for after a short silence she spoke of other things.

The dinner having progressed to the salad course, visiting was in order, and the guests sauntered from table to table, exchanging chairs and partners. Jane Loring was one of the first to take advantage of this opportunity to escape, and found a seat at Honora Ledyard's table between Bibby Worthington and Percy Endicott.

Nellie Pennington watched her departure calmly, for

DEEP WATER

she had learned what she had set out to learn. All women, no matter how youthful, are clever at dissimulation, but the art being common to all women, deceives none. And Jane, skillful though she had been in hiding her thoughts from Gallatin, deceived neither Nellie Pennington nor Nina Jaffray.

Dinner over, Nellie Pennington followed the crowd to the gunroom. The married set were already at their auction and somebody beckoned to her to make a four, but she refused. On this night she had a mission. She wandered from group to group, keeping one eye on Jane and the other on Phil, until the music began, when with one accord, all but the most devoted of the bridge-players returned to the hall, from which the furniture had been cleared, and where the polished wax surface shone invitingly. Mrs. Pennington waited until the waltz was well under way and saw Jane Loring circling the room safely with Larry Kane, when she went into the library alone. Her thought had crystallized into a definite plan.

It was at the end of the third dance when Jane, on the arm of Percy Endicott was on her way to the terrace for a breath of air, that Bibby Worthington slipped a note into her fingers. She excused herself and took it to the nearest electric bulb. She knew the handwriting at once. It was in Nina Jaffray's picturesque scrawl.

"Jane, dear," it ran. "I *must* see you for a moment about something which concerns you intimately. Meet me at twelve by the fountain in the loggia of the tennis court.

"NINA."

Jane turned the note over, and re-read it; then with quick scorn, tore it into tiny pieces and scattered them into the bushes. The impudence of her! She had given Nina credit for better taste. What right had she to

THE SILENT BATTLE

intrude again in Jane's private affairs when she must know how little her offices were appreciated? And yet, what was this she had to say? Something that concerned Jane intimately? What could that be unless——

Coleman Van Duyn appeared and claimed the next dance, which he begged that she would sit out. Jane agreed because it would give her a chance to think. There was little real exertion required in talking to Coley.

What could Nina want to tell her? And where—did she say? In the loggia of the tennis court—at twelve. It must be almost that now.

At five minutes of twelve Nellie Pennington handed Gallatin a note.

“From Nina,” she whispered. “It's really outrageous, Phil, the way you're flirting with that trusting child. I'm sure you ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

The tennis court was at the far end of the long house. It was reached by passing first a succession of rooms which made up the main building, into the conservatory, by the swimming-pool and loggia. The loggia was a red-tiled portico, enclosed in glass during the winter, in the center of which was a fountain surrounded by a circular marble bench, all filched from an old Etruscan villa. Tonight it was unlighted except by the glow from the bronze Japanese lamps in the conservatory; an ideal spot for a tryst, so far removed from the main body of the house and so cool in winter that it was seldom used except as a promenade or as a haven by those purposely belated. Gallatin, the scrap of paper in his fingers, strolled through the deserted halls, smoking thoughtfully. Nina Jaffray was beginning to grate just a little on his nerves. He had no idea what she wanted of him and he didn't much care.

He only knew that it was almost time for him to make

DEEP WATER

his meaning clear to her in terms which might not be misunderstood. As he entered the obscurity of the loggia, he saw the head and shoulders of a figure in white above the back of the stone bench.

"You wanted to see me?" he said.

At the sound of his voice, the figure rose, stood poised breathless, and he saw that it was not Nina.

"I?" Jane's voice answered.

He stopped and the cigarette slipped from his fingers.

"I—I beg pardon. I was told that——"

"That I wanted to see you?" she broke in scornfully.

"No. Not you——" he replied, still puzzled.

"There has been a mistake, Mr. Gallatin. I do not want to see you. If you'll excuse me——"

She made a movement to go, but Gallatin stood in the aperture, the only avenue of escape, and did not move. His hands were at his sides, his head bent forward, his eyes gazing into the pool.

"Wait——" he muttered, as though to himself. "Don't go yet. I've something to say—just a word—it will not take a moment. Will you listen?"

"I suppose I—I must," she stammered.

"I hear——" he began painfully, "that it's true that you're going to marry Mr. Van Duyn."

"And what if it is?" she flashed at him.

"Nothing—except that I hope you'll be happy. I wish you——"

"Thanks," dryly. "When I'm ready for the good wishes—of—of anybody, I'll ask for them. At present—will you let me pass, please?"

"Yes—in a moment. I thought perhaps you might be willing to tell me whether it's true, the report of your engagement?"

THE SILENT BATTLE

“ I can't see how that can be any interest of yours.”

“ Only the interest of one you once cared for and who——”

“ Mr. Gallatin, I forbid it,” she said hurriedly. “ Would you be so unmanly as to take advantage of your position here? Isn't it enough that I no longer care to know you, that I prefer to choose my own friends? ”

“ Will you answer my question? ” he repeated doggedly.

“ No. You have no right to question me.”

“ I'm assuming the right. Your memory of the past——”

“ There is no past. It was the dream of a silly child in another world where men were honest and women clean. I've grown older, Mr. Gallatin.”

“ Yes, but not in mercy, not in compassion, not in charity.”

“ Speak of virtue before you speak of mercy, of pride before compassion, of decency before charity—if you can,” she added contemptuously.

“ You're cruel,” he muttered, “ horribly so.”

“ I'm wiser than I was. The world has done me that service. And if cruelty is the price of wisdom, I'll pay it. Baseness, meanness, improbity in business or in morals no longer surprise me. They're woven into the tissue of life. I can abominate the conditions that cause them, but they are the world. And, until I choose to live alone, I must accept them even if I despise the men and women who practice them, Mr. Gallatin.”

“ And you call this wisdom? This disbelief in everything—in everybody, this threadbare creed of the jaded women of the world? ”

“ Call it what you like. Neither your opinions nor your principles (or the lack of them) mean anything to

DEEP WATER

me. If I had known you were here I should not have come to-night. I pray that we may never meet again."

He stood silent a long moment, searching her face with his eyes. She was so cold, so white and wraithlike, and her voice was so strange, so impersonal, that he was almost ready to believe that she was some one else. It was the voice of a woman without a soul—a calm, ruthless voice which sought to wound, to injure or destroy. It had been on his lips to speak of the past, to translate into the words the pain at his heart. He had been ready to take one step forward, to seize her in his arms and compel her by the might of his tenderness to return the love that he bore her. If he had done so then, perhaps fortune would have favored him—have favored them both; for in the hour of their greatest intolerance women are sometimes most vulnerable. But he could not. Her words chilled him to insensibility, scourged his pride and made him dumb and unyielding.

"If that is your wish," he said quietly, "I will do my best to respect it. I'd like you to remember one thing, though, and that is that this meeting was not of my seeking. If I've detained you, it was with the hope that perhaps you might be willing to listen to the truth, to learn what a dreadful mistake you have made, of the horrible wrong you have done——"

"To you?"

"No," sternly. "To Nina Jaffray. Think what you like of me," he went on with sudden passion. "It doesn't matter. You can't make a new pain sharper than the old one. But you've got to do justice to her."

"What is the use, Mr. Gallatin?"

"It's a lie that they've told, a cruel lie, as you'll learn some day when it will be too late to repair the wrong you've done."

THE SILENT BATTLE

"I don't believe that it was a lie, Mr. Gallatin. A lie will not persist against odds. This does. You've done your duty. Now please let me go."

"Not yet. You needn't be afraid of me."

"Let me pass."

"In a moment—when you listen. You must. Nina Jaffray is blameless. She would not deny such a story. It would demean her to deny it as it demeans me."

"It does demean you," she broke in pitilessly, "as other things have demeaned you. Shame, Mr. Gallatin! Do you think I could believe the word of a man who seeks revenge for a woman's indifference? Who finding her invulnerable goes to the ends of his resources to attack the members of her family? Trying by methods known only to himself and those of his kind to hinder the success of those more diligent than himself, to smirch the good name of an honest man, to obtain money——"

"Stop," cried Gallatin hoarsely, and in spite of herself she obeyed. For he was leaning forward toward her, the long fingers of one hand trembling before him.

"You've gone almost too far, Miss Loring," he whispered. "You are talking about things of which you know nothing. I will not speak of that, nor shall you, for whatever our relations have been or are now, nothing in them justifies that insult. Time will prove the right or the wrong of the matter between Henry K. Loring and me as time will prove the right and the wrong to his daughter. I ask nothing of her now, nor ever shall, not even a thought. The girl I am thinking of was gentle, kind, sincere. She looked with the eyes of compassion, the far-seeing gaze of innocence unclouded by bitterness or doubt. I gave her all that was best in me, all that was honest, all that was true, and in return she gave me courage, purpose, resolution. I loved her for herself, because she *was*

DEEP WATER

herself, but more for the things she represented—purity, nobility, strength which I drew from her like an inspiration. It was to her that I owed the will to conquer myself, the purpose to win back my self-respect. I thanked God for her then and I'm thankful now, but I'm more thankful that I'm no longer dependent on her."

Jane had sunk on the bench again, her head bent and a sound came from her lips. But he did not hear it.

"I do not need her now," he went on quietly. "What she was is only a memory; what she is, only a regret. I shall live without her. I shall live without any woman, for no woman could ever be to me what that memory is. I love it passionately, reverently, madly, tenderly, and will be true to it, as I have always been. And, if ever the moment comes when the woman that girl has grown to be looks into the past, let her remember that love knows not doubt or bitterness, that it lives upon itself, is sufficient unto itself and that, whatever happens, is faithful until death."

He stopped and stepped aside.

"I have finished, Miss Loring. Now go!"

The peremptory note startled her and she straightened and slowly rose. His head was bowed but his finger pointed toward the door of the conservatory. As she passed him she hesitated as though about to speak, and then slowly raising her head walked past him and disappeared.

XXVI

BIG BUSINESS

TOOKER fidgeted uneasily with the papers on the junior partner's desk, moving to the safe in the main office and back again, bringing bundles of documents which he disposed in an orderly row where Mr. Gallatin could put his hands on them. Eleven o'clock was the hour set for the conference between Henry K. Loring and Philip Gallatin. Mr. Leuppold had written last week that Mr. Loring had agreed to a conference and asked Mr. Gallatin to come to his, Mr. Leuppold's, private office at a given time. Gallatin had agreed to the day and hour named, but politely insisted that Mr. Leuppold and Mr. Loring come to *his* office. It would have made no difference in the result, of course, but Gallatin had reasons of his own.

At ten o'clock Philip Gallatin came in and read his mail. He had returned yesterday from his southern visit, and in the afternoon had gone over, with Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Hood, the details of the case. The matter had been discussed freely, but it was clear to Tooker, who had been present, that the other partners had been able to add nothing but their approval to the work which Gallatin had done.

His mail finished, Gallatin took up the other papers on his desk and scrutinized them carefully, after which he glanced at his watch and pressed the button for the chief clerk.

BIG BUSINESS

"There has been no message from Mr. Leuppold, Tooker?" he asked.

"Nothing."

Gallatin smiled. "That's good. I was figuring on a slight chance that they might want more time, and ask a postponement."

"I had thought of that."

"It wouldn't help them. I guess they've found that out."

"I hope so. But I shouldn't take any chances."

"No, I won't," he returned grimly. And then, "Mr. Markham is here, isn't he?"

"Yes. He came early. I've shown him into Mr. Kenyon's office as you directed."

"Very good, Tooker. And I will want you, so please don't go out."

"I'm not going out this morning, Mr. Gallatin," said Tooker, with a grin.

After the chief clerk had disappeared Gallatin walked to the window where he stood for a long while with his hands behind his back, looking out toward the Jersey shore. His thoughts were not pleasant ones. The words of Jane's recrimination were still ringing in his ears. It was Henry Loring, of course, who had put all that into her head, but he blamed her for the readiness with which she had been willing to condemn him from the first, the facility with which she had been able to turn from him to another.

His idyl had passed.

He turned into the room, brows lowering and jaws set, and went to his desk again. There, at a few moments past eleven, Tooker brought in word that Mr. Leuppold and Mr. Loring were waiting to see him.

"Tell them to wait in the outer office, Tooker," he

THE SILENT BATTLE

said with a gleam in his eye, "that I will be at liberty in a few moments. I'll ring for you."

When Tooker had gone, Gallatin sat down again, glanced at his watch, then took up the morning paper, which he had not yet opened, and read, smiling. It amused him to think of Henry K. Loring sitting in the outer office, wasting time worth a hundred dollars a minute. It amused him so much that he dropped the paper, put his feet up on his desk, and lit a cigarette, to enjoy the situation more thoroughly. Leuppold, too, his suavity slowly yielding to his impatience, would be twisting his watch-fob by now or tapping his fat fingers on his legs, while he waited, his ease of mind little improved by the delay.

Gallatin's smile diminished with his cigarette, and at last he looked at his watch and put his feet on the floor and rang for the chief clerk.

"You may show those gentlemen in, Tooker," he said quietly.

Tooker glanced at the ashes of the cigarette, picked up the newspaper and put it on a chair in the corner, then laid one or two documents obtrusively open, on Mr. Gallatin's desk. Phil watched him with a smile. Tooker was a thoughtful and cautious soul.

But he was reading the nearest document intently when Loring and Leuppold entered. He turned in his chair—rose and bowed.

"You've met Mr. Loring, Mr. Gallatin?" said Leuppold.

Loring dropped his chin abruptly the fraction of an inch, peering keenly about, his lips drawn in a thin and unpleasant smile. Phil Gallatin indicated a chair at one end of the table, into which Loring stiffly sat, with one arm on the table, his bull-neck thrust forward, peering

BIG BUSINESS

steadily at the younger man, watching every movement, studying his face as though trying by the intentness of his gaze to solve the question as to whether this curiously inconsistent young man was a menace or merely a nuisance.

Gallatin laid some papers upon the table, took some others from Tooker and moved his desk chair to the table. If he felt Loring's scrutiny, his calm demeanor gave no sign of it, for after a few commonplaces he began addressing his remarks directly to Mr. Leuppold's client.

"I don't propose to take up a great deal of your time, gentlemen," he began, "and I think I can state my position in a very few moments." He took out his watch and looked at it. "About twenty minutes, I think. The facts, as you both know, are these: John Sanborn, representing the minority stockholders of the Sanborn Mining Company, filed an injunction against the President and Board of Directors of the Sanborn Mining Company to prevent the sale of its properties and interests to the Pequot Coal Company. This injunction was lost in the Supreme Court and was appealed to the Appellate Court, when the case came into my hands. That appeal is pending. That is a correct statement, is it not?"

"It is," said Leuppold blandly, while Loring nodded his head.

"The sale has, therefore, not been consummated and cannot be consummated until the higher court has affirmed the decision of the lower one or reversed it."

"That is also true, Mr. Gallatin," said Leuppold. "Proceed, sir."

Gallatin hesitated, his brows drew together and his voice took a deeper note.

"This case, Mr. Leuppold, is one which involves not only large issues but large principles. The Sanborn Min-

THE SILENT BATTLE

ing Company owns the most valuable coal properties, with the possible exception of those owned by the Pequot Coal Company, in the State of Pennsylvania, and until 1909 was doing an enormous business with the trade centers of the East, working at full capacity and employing an army of men in getting its coal to market. Its only rival in production was the Pequot Coal Company, of which Mr. Loring, as he has admitted, controls the majority of the stock.

“In the summer of 1909, conditions changed. The Lehigh and Pottsville Railroad Company found it impossible to furnish cars to the Sanborn mines. I have copies of the correspondence, relating to the matter: repeated letters of request on the part of the Sanborn Company and excuses on the part of the railroad company, as well as frequent promises which were never fulfilled.”

“What has that to do with the pending suit?” asked Leuppold carelessly, with an effective shrug of his shoulder.

“I’m coming to that, Mr. Leuppold. And I ask for your patience,” said Gallatin. “This failure of the railroad company to provide facilities for the shipment of the coal of the Sanborn Mines,” he continued, “is all the more remarkable when it is known that while this very correspondence was going on, its sidings between Phillipsville and Williamstown were full of empty cars, and when it is also known that the Pequot Coal Company was working on full time and shipping to New York City, alone, one hundred and fifty cars of coal a day.”

“We had contracts with the railroad,” snapped Loring. “We forced them to provide for us.”

“So had the Sanborn Company contracts, Mr. Loring,” said Gallatin.

“Really!” sneered Loring.

BIG BUSINESS

Tooker quickly abstracted a paper from a sheaf and handed it to Gallatin.

“Read for yourself.”

The sneer on Loring’s lips faded, and his eyes opened wider as he read. It was not a copy, but the contract itself.

“I have also a volume of evidence about the empty cars which verifies my statement. Would you care to look over it?”

“No. Go on,” growled Loring.

“Gentlemen,” Gallatin went on, enunciating his words with great distinctness. “This was discrimination—of a kind which at this time is not popular with the Government of the United States.”

“But if you’ll permit me, Mr. Gallatin,” Leuppold’s suave voice broke in, “what has this to do with the Sanborn injunction suit? And how can my client be held in any way responsible for the action of the Lehigh and Pottsville Railroad Company for its failure to fulfill its contracts to the Sanborn Company?”

Gallatin raised a protesting hand.

“I’m coming to that, Mr. Leuppold. In a moment, sir. The conditions I have already mentioned have forced the Sanborn Company practically to shut down. Coal is being mined and a few cars a day are shipped, but, as you gentlemen are well aware, dividends have been passed for two years and the value of the stock has depreciated. This much for the conditions which have caused that depreciation. The Pequot Coal Company, taking advantage of the low market value of the shares, has made an offer for the property—an offer, gentlemen, which as you both know, represents not one-twentieth of the Sanborn Company’s holdings.”

“I can’t agree with that,” put in Leuppold quickly.

THE SILENT BATTLE

“It was a fair offer, accepted by the Board of Directors of the Sanborn Company, Mr. Sanborn alone dissenting.”

Gallatin arose and picked up a package wrapped in rubber bands.

“I’m ready to talk about that Board of Directors now, Mr. Leuppold,” he said quietly, with his eyes on Loring’s face, “and I’m also ready to talk about the Board of Directors of the Lehigh and Pottsville Railroad Company.”

Henry K. Loring’s expression was immovable, but Mr. Leuppold’s fingers were already at his watch-fob.

“I’m going to lay my hand on the table, gentlemen,” Gallatin went on with a quiet laugh. “I’m going to show you all my cards and let them play themselves. I’m going to prove to you so clearly that you can’t doubt the accuracy of my information or the character of my evidence that I am aware that Henry K. Loring has at the present time not only the control of the stock of the Sanborn Mining Company, but that he also controls a voting majority of the stock of the Lehigh and Pottsville Railroad Company.”

Leuppold laughed outright.

“Absurd, sir. Your statement is flattering to my client, but I beg that you will confine your remarks to the bounds of reason.”

“I will to the bounds of reason, to the bounds of fact. It’s no laughing matter, Mr. Leuppold, as you’ll discover presently. I will not speak of Mr. Loring’s connection with the railroad for a moment. Perhaps, since this conference has been called with especial reference to the injunction suit, the proof of Mr. Loring’s majority stock ownership in the Sanborn Company will be sufficient.”

“You can’t prove it without manufactured evidence.”

BIG BUSINESS

Gallatin flushed. "Call it what you like, it's here—in my possession. The majority stock of the Sanborn Mining Company is now owned by Henry K. Loring, and has been voted under cover for the benefit of the Pequot Coal Company."

"That's a grave charge, Mr. Gallatin."

"So grave that I thought it fairer to Mr. Loring to have him learn what I know, before bringing the matter into court."

"You have proved nothing yet."

Gallatin opened some papers and laid them on the table.

"I have here an affidavit of a former employee of Mr. Loring which I propose to offer in evidence."

"Who?" growled Loring.

"One moment, please. I have also an abstract from the books of the company with entries showing the purchase of stock, the amounts, the price and the dates of payment."

Leuppold leaned forward in his chair.

"*Even you* must know, Mr. Gallatin, that that's not evidence."

"I'm well aware of that, but when the time comes, Mr. Leuppold, I intend to call for the production of the original books."

Leuppold raised a protesting hand and then said craftily:

"Those books are lost, Mr. Gallatin."

Gallatin only smiled at him.

"Thanks for that information, Mr. Leuppold. For that being the case, *even you* will admit that my copy is admissible in secondary evidence."

Loring's quick glance caught Leuppold's. The point was well taken. Leuppold covered his confusion with a

THE SILENT BATTLE

magnificent gesture and a resumption of his blindest manner.

"How are you going to prove that these are copies from the books?" he asked easily.

"I will produce that evidence at the proper time."

"Produce it now——"

"I will, if necessary."

"That is the weakness of your case, Mr. Gallatin; you can't produce it," he sneered.

Gallatin turned to the chief clerk and said: "The checks, Tooker."

Gallatin removed some slips of paper from the envelope Tooker handed him, and held them carelessly in his fingers, so that the two men, who were eying them eagerly, could see the name of the bank and the signature at the lower right hand corner.

"Perhaps Mr. Loring will deny his own signature?" he asked quietly. "These checks I hold are signed with Mr. Loring's name, a signature with which we are all familiar, and were given to Mr. Loring's brokers for the purchase of Sanborn stock. I may add that the date of entry on the books of the company in each case corresponds with the date on the checks, as does the amount."

He stepped to Loring's side and held several of the checks up just beyond his reach.

"That's not my signature," said Loring.

Gallatin handed the checks to Tooker.

"You're not convinced?"

"No. It's a forgery."

"Then I'll find other means of convincing you. Perhaps, if I produced a man who saw you sign those checks——"

Loring had risen to his feet and spoke but one word. It was the popular one for the infernal regions.

BIG BUSINESS

Gallatin smiled. And then to the chief clerk, "Tooker, show Mr. Markham in, please."

The situation had gotten beyond the control of Mr. Leuppold, who was completely nonplused by Mr. Gallatin's rapidity, succinctness and damnable accuracy; but he made one desperate effort to regain his lost ground.

"Markham, a broken man, a drunkard, a gambler——"

"But once Mr. Loring's secretary," Gallatin broke in significantly. "Wait, Mr. Leuppold."

In a moment Mr. Markham entered. He was a tall man, with keen eyes, hawklike nose and a weak mouth. As he entered Loring turned toward the door and the eyes of the two men met, Loring's curious, the newcomer's eager and unflinching.

"Mr. Markham," asked Gallatin, "do you know this gentleman?"

"Yes. He is Henry K. Loring."

"Have you ever seen these checks?"

"Yes. I drew them and saw Mr. Loring sign them."

"And this affidavit?"

"I wrote it."

"And this abstract of the books of the Sanborn Company?"

"I have seen it."

"Is it correct?"

"In every particular."

"All right. That will be all for the present. Will you remain outside?"

"Wait, sir!" Leuppold's voice rang out. "I haven't finished with Mr. Markham yet."

"You'll have the opportunity of questioning him at the proper time and place," said Gallatin smoothly. "That will be all, Mr. Markham."

THE SILENT BATTLE

“I protest, Mr. Gallatin, against your methods of conducting this meeting,” said Leuppold, rising and extending a quavery arm. “You bring as your chief evidence a man once in the employ of my client, a discredited clerk, a man discharged for drunkenness, for incompetence, for dishonesty.”

“No—for *honesty*, Mr. Leuppold,” Gallatin broke in hotly. “That was why he was discharged. He was too honest to understand the ethics of big business and his utility was at an end. So Mr. Loring let him go. That was a mistake. He knew too much, Mr. Leuppold.”

“You’ll have a chance to prove what he knows, sir. There won’t be much difficulty in discrediting his testimony——”

“You’re making a mistake, Mr. Leuppold,” broke in Gallatin, his voice now thundering. “The question here isn’t so much one of law as it is one of morals. That injunction may be dissolved by the Court of Appeals; but I give you my word that, if you insist on carrying through that sale of the Sanborn Mines to the Pequot Coal Company, I propose to charge your client and the directors of the Sanborn Company with *conspiracy*; and I’ll convict them—just as sure as the Lord made little apples!”

He dominated the situation and felt it in the short hush that followed his concluding remarks, and in the rapid revolution of Leuppold’s watch charm. Loring had sunk back in his chair, both of his great hands clasping its arms, his gaze on Gallatin’s face, critical but smiling. What he saw there evidently brought a realization that Mr. Gallatin held the whip hand; for as Leuppold began speaking again, he moved one of his hands through the air and rose.

“Wait!” he said. He took two or three paces across the room, between window and door and then stood, his

BIG BUSINESS

hands in his trousers pockets, fumbling at his keys. It was at least five minutes before he spoke again. But at last he stopped in front of Gallatin and looked at him from head to toe, and suddenly to every one's surprise, broke out into a loud laugh.

"Mr. Gallatin, you've beaten me."

Success had come so quickly and the end of the case so suddenly that Gallatin looked at his adversary, not certain whether to believe his own ears, and half suspecting some kind of a ruse or trick, the art of which Henry K. Loring, as he knew, was past grand master, when he went on again.

"I don't propose to ask you how you found Mr. Markham out in Illinois, or to try and learn what your methods were in getting together all this evidence. I know it's there and that's enough. I did write those checks and the abstracts from the books are doubtless correct. I suppose," he laughed again, "your evidence of my connection with the Lehigh and Pottsville is quite tangible?"

"Quite tangible," repeated Gallatin, scarcely concealing a smile.

"Then all I have to say, sir, is that you are a very extraordinary young man, a very useful young man to your clients, a very disappointing one to your adversaries." And then turning to Leuppold: "*You* may contest, if you like, Mr. Leuppold. *I won't*. This case is one for settlement."

Then he turned to Gallatin again, and offered his huge hand, while the younger man, still doubtful, eyed him keenly.

"You and I had words some time ago. I'm sorry for them. Will you forgive me?"

There was no doubt about the genuineness of his contrition.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Willingly, Mr. Loring," he said.

Their fingers clasped and their eyes met.

"I underestimated you, Mr. Gallatin," he went on again slowly. "I don't often make a mistake in my judgment of men, but I did of you. I'm a self-made man and people will tell you I'm a little proud of the job. But I'm not too proud to tell you that you've been a little too clever for me. I know when I'm beaten and I'm not afraid to say so. We'll fix this thing up. I don't want all the coal in Pennsylvania. I own sixty per cent. of the Sanborn stock. Sanborn's crowd owns the rest. I'll sell out twenty per cent. to some man agreed on and we'll make him president."

"At the present market figure, Mr. Loring?" asked Gallatin shrewdly.

Loring rubbed his head and smiled.

"We'll see about that," he muttered at last. But there was a twinkle in his eyes as he asked. "How would you like that job, Mr. Gallatin?"

Gallatin grinned.

"I'd take it, if I could get enough cars to make it profitable."

"I reckon you can make it profitable enough, for everybody," he growled jovially. "We've got to have you in with us, and that's all there is about it. Will you accept?"

"With Sanborn's consent, yes."

"We'll fix Sanborn, all right," he finished. "Come to my office some time, Mr. Gallatin, I want to talk to you."

Gallatin followed the two men to the elevator, while Tooker, after the door was closed, moved from one leg to the other in what he fondly believed to be a dance of joy.

XXVII

MR. LORING REFLECTS

HENRY K. LORING sat back in his machine, homeward bound, his head deep in the collar of his overcoat, his eyes under their shaggy brows peering out of the windows of the limousine. His heavy hands, one over the other, grasped the handle of his cane, which stood upright between his firmly planted feet. He looked out of the windows at the quickly changing scene, but his eyes saw nothing. There was a frown at his brow, his lips were drawn firmly together and a casual glance might have lent to the belief that the great operator was weighted with a more than usually heavy financial burden. But a closer inspection would have shown a slight upward twist of his lips and scarcely perceptible puckering of the wrinkles at the corners of his eyes. For a man whose business affairs had on that day been subjected to the searching inquisition that Mr. Gallatin had put them to, he seemed to be taking life rather good-naturedly.

To tell the truth he was thinking of the futile efforts of the elder Leuppold in trying to stem the tide which had set so strongly against him. He had gone over Mr. Gallatin's evidence at the conference point by point, and the hours had only confirmed him in the realization that this young man, whom he had scorned, had given the oily and ingenious Leuppold a very unpleasant morning; for wriggle as Leuppold might, there had been no escaping the young man's clear-headed statements, and the dan-

THE SILENT BATTLE

gerous nature of his evidence. Henry K. Loring was a good fighter, a shrewd judge of men, and the thing that most bothered him at the present moment was, not that he had been obliged to compromise the Sanborn case, but that he should have been so mistaken in the character and abilities of Philip Gallatin. He couldn't understand it at all, and it hurt his pride in his own judgment. Was this sharp young man with the lean face, the keen eye and the quick incisive tones of confidence in himself, was this brilliant hard-working young lawyer who had been clever enough to outwit Henry Loring at his own game, was *this* Phil Gallatin, the club loafer, at whose name men had wagged their heads or shrugged their shoulders in pity or contempt? It didn't seem possible. There was a mistake somewhere. Was this the young man who——?

He sat straight up suddenly as the thought came to him. By George! This was Jane's young man! The fellow who had found Jane up in the woods! Who had followed her around and made love to her! The fellow Jane had been in love with until he, Loring, had opened her eyes and packed him out of the house about his business. That was too bad. Loring was sorry about that now. He had done Gallatin an injustice. Curious that he should have made such a mistake. He would have to rectify it somehow—with Jane.

What was the trouble? Oh, yes, a woman—that was what had turned Jane against him. A woman—well? It wasn't the first time a man had been led off by a woman. What of it? The Gallatin with whom he had recently become acquainted wasn't the kind of a fellow who would let any woman get the best of him. That was his own affair, anyway. He, Loring, would have to talk to Jane. Gallatin was all right. He had quit drinking, too, the

MR. LORING REFLECTS

younger Leuppold had said. Any young fellow who could work up a case like that under cover and drive a man like Henry K. Loring to the wall was good enough for him! That was the kind of a man he wanted for Jane, just the kind of man to take up the game where he would leave it and hold the great Loring interests together. What did Jane want anyhow? She had loved Phil Gallatin once. Her mother had told him so. And now she had settled on Coleman Van Duyn! Hell!

He got down at his own door with a sudden resolve to find out just how things stood with Jane and Coley Van Duyn. Mrs. Loring had wanted that match. It wasn't any of Loring's choosing. She had wanted an old Dutch ancestry. She'd be getting it with Coley and that was about all she would get. Jane had been expected back with the Ledyards from Virginia this morning. Perhaps it wasn't too late for her father to step into the breach and repair the damage he had done.

In reply to his question of the man in the hall, he learned that Miss Loring had returned from the South during the morning, but that she had been in her room all day. Henry K. Loring climbed the marble stairs and went along the landing to Mrs. Loring's room. He found her lying on the divan, a handkerchief crumpled in her hands, her face stained with tears. A look of resignation that was half a frown came into Loring's face. Like many another man, big in his walks abroad, he lost some stature in the presence of a tearful wife.

At his entrance she straightened and said irritably, "I thought you were never coming."

"I was detained." He looked at his watch. "Aren't you going to dress?"

"No. I'm going to have my dinner brought up."

"What's the matter?"

THE SILENT BATTLE

“ Oh, what *isn't* the matter? Jane, of course! ”

“ Jane! ”

“ I can't make her out at all. She came back from Warrenton this morning and went immediately to her room. I went in this afternoon again. She was looking miserably unhappy, and when I began talking to her she burst into tears——”

“ Nerves? ” he queried.

“ Oh, I don't know. She hasn't been herself for some time. She's looking very badly. ”

“ Yes, I noticed that. What do you think the trouble is? ”

Mrs. Loring sank back with a sigh.

“ Oh, I don't know. I never did understand Jane, and I don't suppose I ever shall. She says she isn't going to anything this spring—that she wants to go abroad, away from everybody. And, finally, when I pressed her—she told me that she had given Coleman Van Duyn his congé. Think of it! ”

The poor lady rattled on while Loring turned his back and walked the length of the room to hide a smile which grew suddenly at his lips. When she had finished speaking, he returned and questioned again.

“ Why did she change her mind? Do you know? ”

“ I don't think she *has* changed her mind. I don't believe that she has ever cared for Mr. Van Duyn. It was all a mask to hide her real feelings. I'm sure she still loves that worthless Gallatin! ”

Loring's eyebrows lifted, his gaze roved and his lips were quickly compressed. Then his brows tangled.

“ What makes you think that? ” he asked.

“ Everything makes me think it—everything—from the manner in which she first confessed her love for him to me to the curious way she has been treating Mr. Van

MR. LORING REFLECTS

Duyn. He spoke about the matter only last week. Poor fellow! He's beginning to look very badly. Jane hasn't treated him fairly."

"That depends. They were never engaged."

Mrs. Loring raised herself on one elbow, her eyes searching her husband's face in surprise.

"There was an understanding."

"Between you and Van Duyn. Jane never consented."

"Henry, I don't understand you. You've let this thing go on without speaking. You approved——"

"No, I didn't approve," he said quickly. "I merely acquiesced."

Mrs. Loring showed signs of inward agitation.

"Oh, I give her up. I've done the best I could. She has behaved very badly and I—I don't know what to think of her." She began sobbing into her handkerchief and renewed her familiar plaint. "I do the best I can for her—for you, but you're always going against me—both of you. I've tried so hard this winter—kept going when my nerves were on the ragged edge of collapse, just because I thought it was my duty——"

"There, there, Mother, don't be foolish," said Loring soothingly. "Jane is young, too young to marry anyway. She'll decide some day."

"No. I know her. She makes up her mind to a thing and she'll cling to it until death. She's like you in that way. She would rather die than change. I ought to have realized that. If she can't marry Phil Gallatin, she won't marry any one. Phil Gallatin," she cried, "the least desirable young man in New York, a man without a character, without friends, the last of a tainted stock, a fortune hunter, dissolute——"

He let her go on until she had exhausted both her

THE SILENT BATTLE

adjectives and her nerves while he listened thoughtfully, and then asked,

"You're sure she still loves Mr. Gallatin?"

"I've tried to believe that she would forget him—that she would learn to care for Mr. Van Duyn. But she hasn't. She has never been the same girl since you told her about that dreadful Jaffray woman. I'm afraid she'll be sick—really sick. But I can't do anything. What *can* I do?" The poor lady looked up plaintively, but her husband had walked to the window and was looking out into the Avenue.

"Humph!" he grunted. "Lovesick, eh? There ought to be a cure for that."

"What?"

"Let her marry him."

"Henry!" Mrs. Loring sat bolt upright on her couch, her eyes wide with incomprehension. "What do you mean?"

"What I say," he returned calmly.

"That—Jane—should—marry Phil Gallatin?"

He nodded.

"You're mad!" she said, getting up and facing him. "Stark mad! When you learned about them, you told me you'd rather see her dead than married to him."

"Now I'd rather see her married to him than dead. It's simple enough. I've changed my mind."

"Am I taking leave of my senses—or are you?"

"Neither, Mother," he went over to her, his huge frame towering above her small body as his mind towered over hers, and took her gently by the elbows. "I've made a mistake. So have you. But it's not too late to mend it. I say that if Jane wants Phil Gallatin, she shall have him."

"No, no. What has happened, Henry?"

MR. LORING REFLECTS

“I’ve opened my eyes, that’s all, or rather Gallatin has opened them for me. I’m glad he did. And now I’m going to open yours. Phil Gallatin is a full-sized *man*. I found that out to-day—a man, every inch of one. I don’t care about his past. I wasn’t anything to brag about when I was a kid, and you know that, too. I didn’t amount to a hill of beans until my father died and I went up against it good and hard. I was down to bedrock, as Phil Gallatin was, until I got kicked once too often, and then I learned to kick back, and I’ve been kicking back ever since. I don’t care about Phil Gallatin’s past. That belongs to him. The only thing that matters about the man Jane marries is his future. That’s hers.”

Loring put his hands in his pockets and walked up and down the rug, his bulk, physical and mental, dominating Mrs. Loring’s tears.

“Listen to me. I’ve let you go on with your plans for Jane and I haven’t said anything, because I knew that when the time came for Jane to marry, your plans wouldn’t amount to much and mine wouldn’t either. Oh, I’ve been looking on. I’ve been watching this Van Duyn affair. I’ve never thought Jane would ever marry a nonentity like Van Duyn. If I had thought so, I guess I might have worried. But I didn’t worry because I never thought she *did* want to marry him. It seems I was right,” he chuckled.

He waited a moment as though expecting an interruption from his wife, but she made none, and only sat in hopeless uncertainty listening dumbly.

“For all her inexperience, Jane has an old head, Mother. This splendor we’re living in, her success in society, the flattery and compliments haven’t changed her any. And she’s not going to let anybody make a fool of her. She sees through people better than you do and

THE SILENT BATTLE

she doesn't make many mistakes. I ought to have known she wouldn't have fallen in love with Phil Gallatin if there hadn't been something to him. I'll give her credit for that——"

"What makes you think he's worthy of her?" Mrs. Loring broke in. "You talk of his future. What future can there be for a man with a habit——"

"Wait!" he commanded. "As to that—he's quit, do you understand? Quit it altogether. I'm just as sure of that as I am that Jane's judgment was better than mine, so sure that I'm willing to stake Jane's future on it. You needn't ask me why I know it, but I do. He's made good—with me and he's made good with himself."

And while she listened he told her of the events of the morning which had resulted in the failure of his financial project and of Gallatin's share in it.

"And is this a reason? You're willing to forgive him his sins, his evil reputation, and take him into your house as the husband of your only child, because he stands in the way of your making a lot of money? I don't understand."

"There's a lot you don't understand. You and I don't use the same kind of mental machinery. But I want you to know that any boy of his age who's got the nerve to tackle a big game the way he did that one and win out against a man of *my* caliber is the kind of a young man I want on my side. He's the kind of a young man I've been looking for ever since I went into the coal business, and I'm not going to let him go if I can help it."

"But his morals! You must know what people say about him, that he's——"

"I don't care what they say about him," growled Loring. "Half of the world is lying, and the other half listening. I'm glad he isn't a willy-boy. It's the fellow

MR. LORING REFLECTS

who has to fight temptations that learns the meaning of victory. There are no airholes in the steel that's been through the blast, and that boy has been through the blast. I can read it in his face. He couldn't square up to me the way he did if there was any weakness in him. He's suffered, but it hasn't hurt him any. He's found himself. I'm going to help him. See here, Janet, I'm getting older, and so are you. I've been thinking about it some lately. I'm a pretty rich man and I'm going to be richer. But do you think I want to turn the money I leave over to a man like Coley Van Duyn or Dirwell De Lancey to make ducks and drakes of? Have it turned into an amusement fund for the further debauching of debauched gentility? Make a Trust Fund of it to perpetuate the Pink Tea? I reckon not. I haven't worked all these years for nothing, and I'm going to see that Jane doesn't make the mistakes of other rich men's children. I don't think she wants to anyway. I've always told her that she wouldn't find the man she's going to marry walking up and down Fifth Avenue. The man to keep my estate together has got to be made of different stuff. I've found him. He's an ace that I dropped into the discard by mistake, but I'm going to play him just the same. I want him, and if Jane wants him, too, I'm going to get him for her."

"I don't know what to think of you. I can't see yet——" Mrs. Loring wailed.

Loring stopped beside her and patted her on the shoulder.

"Don't you worry, Janet. I know what I'm about. You leave this to me. Is Jane in her room? I want to see her."

"Yes," said Mrs. Loring in tones of resignation. "She's there, but I don't think she'd see you, even if she

THE SILENT BATTLE

knew what you wanted to talk about. To-morrow, perhaps."

Loring shrugged his massive shoulders. "Oh, all right," he growled, and made his way to his own dressing-room. He held the keys to the situation in his hand, and manlike wanted to use them without delay, to unlock the door that barred the way to happiness for Jane, to act at once upon the inspiration that had come to him and settle for all time the problem of the future. But he took his wife's advice and postponed the talk with his daughter, wondering at the ways of women. He dined alone and went to his study early, sat at his desk and wrote the following note to Philip Gallatin.

DEAR MR. GALLATIN:

Our meeting this morning was so brief and so public that I was prevented from speaking to you as freely as I would have liked. I've done you a wrong—an injustice, and I want to do what I can to set the matter right, with respect to your future relations with me and with my family. I have already done what I can and I am sure that both Mrs. Loring and my daughter will gladly welcome you as a guest to our house whenever you may call.

I hope this will be soon, Mr. Gallatin. I only wanted to put myself on record with you that you may be assured that there will be no further misunderstandings on your part of our intentions toward you.

Very sincerely yours,

HENRY K. LORING.

The note written, he sealed it and rang for Hastings.

"Have this note delivered at once. Try the Cosmos Club and, if Mr. Gallatin is not there, find him."

This burden off his broad shoulders, Loring smiled, turned on his reading lamp, took some newly acquired snuff boxes out of a cabinet and under his magnifying

MR. LORING REFLECTS

glass, proceeded to enjoy them. It was in the midst of this pleasant occupation that some time later, he was interrupted by the entrance of his daughter. She was dressed in a pale blue lounging robe, and her bedroom slippers made no sound on the heavy floor covering, but the rustle of her draperies caused him to look up.

"Hello, Jane!" he said, kissing her. "Glad to see you, child. You slipped in like a ghost. Feeling any better?"

"Oh, I'm all right," she said wearily. "Mother said you wanted to see me."

Loring put down his magnifying glass and turned toward her.

"Yes, I did. Natural, isn't it? I haven't had a chance to for a month." He made her turn so that he could look into her face. "You're not looking right. Your eyes are big as saucers. What's the matter? Too much gayety?"

"Yes, I think so, Daddy. I'm a little tired, that's all. I need a rest."

Her father examined her in silence for a moment, and then drew her down on a chair near him.

"Jane, I've been thinking about you lately. We've all been so busy this winter, you and mother, with your dances and the opera, and I with business, that I'm afraid we've been drifting apart. I don't like it. You don't ever come in here to see me the way you used to."

"I haven't had time," she evaded.

"That isn't it, daughter. I know. It's something else. Something has come between us. I've felt it and I feel it still."

She opened her eyes wide and looked at him and then looked away.

"That's the truth and you know it, daughter. Some-

THE SILENT BATTLE

thing has come between us. I've missed those talks with you. They used to keep me in touch with the gentler side of life, sort of humanized me somehow, made me a little softer, a little gentler the next day. I've wanted you often, Jane, but I didn't know how to say so. And so I got along without you. You've never quite forgiven me, Jane?"

Jane was pulling at the laces of her tea-gown with thumb and forefinger, but she didn't look up as she asked,

"Forgiven you for what, Daddy?"

"For coming between you and Phil Gallatin," he said gently.

She started a trifle and then went on picking at the lace on her frock.

"Oh, that," she said quietly. "You *had* to do that. I'm glad you did."

"No," he interrupted. "You're not glad, Jane. Neither am I. I did what I thought was my duty, but it has made a difference with us both. I'm sorry."

"Sorry? Why?"

"Because it has made you unhappy—and resentful."

"I'm not resentful."

"Yes. I've felt it. Even if I'd been justified, you would still resent it."

"But you *were* justified, Daddy, weren't you?" she asked.

She turned her gaze full on his face and the pain in her eyes hurt him. He got up and walked the length of the room before he replied.

"I did what I thought was right. I'd probably do the same thing again under similar circumstances. I—I didn't think Mr. Gallatin the kind of man I wanted for you."

She lay back in her chair and looked into the fire, but



"Later, in her mother's absence, Jane found it."

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MR. LORING REFLECTS

said nothing. Loring came close to her and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"You loved him, Jane?"

She didn't reply.

"You still love him, daughter?"

Her head moved slowly from side to side.

"No," she muttered, stifflingly, "no, no."

Loring smiled down at the top of her head.

"Why should you deny it, Jane? What would you say if I acknowledged that I had made a mistake in judgment, that you were right after all, that Phil Gallatin is not the man I thought him, that he's worthy in every way of your regard, that of all the young men I've met in New York in business or out of it, he is the one man I would rather have marry my daughter?"

She had risen and was leaning toward him, pale and trembling.

"What—do—you—mean?" she whispered fearfully.

He told her.

"That case you spoke of——?"

"He beat me—fairly—and he beat me badly, so badly that I can't afford to have him against me. I've taken him into the business. I can't afford to be without him."

"Then—what you said about him——"

"I was fooled, child, completely fooled. We thought he was a joke. We laughed at him and all the while he was out West working, quietly, skillfully, diligently piling up his evidence. He's made good, Jane, and I've told him so. I've written him a note to-night, a note of apology for my share in his unhappiness, telling him that I was sorry for what had happened and telling him that he would be a welcome visitor to my house——"

"Daddy!" Jane had straightened and now glanced fearfully toward the door as though she expected to see

THE SILENT BATTLE

Phil Gallatin at any moment coming through the curtains. "You had no right to do that! I will not see him. Whatever his business relations with you, you have no right to force him on me. I have known for a long time that he was clever, that he could make his way in the world if he wanted to, but your acceptance of him changes nothing with me."

"But you love him," he persisted.

"No, no," she protested. "I could never love a man who had once been faithless—never forgive him—never even in death. That a man is successful in the world is all you men care about. Oh, I know you. Because he's matched his brain against yours and beaten you, you think he's a demigod; but that doesn't change the heart in him, the lips that swear love eternal while they're kissing another——"

"Lies!" broke in Loring with a wave of his hand. "I don't believe that story."

Jane paused and examined him calmly, struggling for her control. When she spoke her voice had sunk to a trembling note scarcely above a whisper.

"Can you prove that story was a lie?"

"Prove it? No. But I believe it was."

"You didn't believe so once. Have you heard anything to make you change your opinion?" she insisted.

He was tempted to lie but thought better of it, and his hesitation cost him victory.

Jane turned toward the door. "I'm going away somewhere—abroad, if you'll let me, away from here. I will not see Mr. Gallatin—ever. I despise him—utterly."

She left her father standing in the middle of the room, his mouth agape, and eyes staring at the door through which she had disappeared. Keen as he was, there were

MR. LORING REFLECTS

still some things in the world, he discovered, about which he needed information.

The next day Mr. Loring received a polite note from Mr. Gallatin which still further mystified him. Mr. Gallatin thanked him for his kind expressions of good will and expressed the intention of studying further to deserve them; but hoped that Mr. Loring would comprehend that reasons which it were better not to mention, would make it impossible for him to take advantage of Mr. Loring's personal kindness in his cordial invitation.

Henry Loring was on the point of tearing up the note in disgust but thought better of it. Instead, with a subtlety which showed that he had not yet lost the knack of taking advantage of the lesser lessons of life, he left it obtrusively upon the dressing table in Mrs. Loring's boudoir, where later, in her mother's absence, Jane found it.

XXVIII

THE LODESTAR

APRIL dissolved in mist and rain and the flowers of May were blossoming. Nellie Pennington, who had not yet despaired, and Nina Jaffray, who had, were driving in the Park in Mrs. Pennington's victoria. For two months Mrs. Pennington had been paying Nina more than usual attention. To begin with she liked her immensely as she had always done. Nina's faults she believed to be the inevitable result of her education and environment, for Nina was the daughter of a Trust, and was its only indulgence. The habit of getting what she wanted was in her blood and she simply couldn't understand being balked in anything. But Nina was beginning slowly and with some difficulty to grasp the essentials of Philip Gallatin's character and the permanence of his reconstruction; and with the passage of time and event Nina had a glimmering of the true caliber of his mind, all of which brought out with unflattering definiteness her own frivolity and gave a touch of farce-comedy, with which she had in her heart been far from investing it, to her unconventional wooing.

Nellie Pennington understood her, and noted with no little satisfaction the evidence of the chastening of her spirit. She knew now beyond all doubt that had it not been for Nina, the reconciliation of Jane and Phil Gallatin would have been effected.

She knew, too, that Nina had not played fair, and guessed by what means Jane had been victimized. Indeed,

THE LODESTAR

Jane's indifference to Nina bore all tokens of intolerance, the intolerance of the pure for the contaminated, the contemptuous pity of the innocent for the guilty. But Mrs. Pennington had not lived in vain, and a talent for living her own life according to an accepted code, had given her a kindly insight into the lives of others. Whatever Nina's faults, she had never merited Jane's pity or contempt. Jane was a fool, of course, but so was Nina, each in her own way—a fool; but of the two it now seemed that Nina was the lesser. Nellie Pennington had already noticed signs that Nina was tired of the game and knew that if Larry Kane played his own trumps with care, he might still win the odd trick, which was Nina. But as far as Jane was concerned, Nellie also knew that Nina was ready to die at her guns, for a dislike once born in Nina's breast was not speedily dispelled.

Mrs. Pennington looked up at the obelisk as though in the hope that some of the wisdom of its centuries might suddenly be imparted to her. Then she asked, "Nina, why don't you marry Larry Kane?"

Nina Jaffray smiled.

"And confess defeat? Why?"

"Better confess it now than later."

"Why confess it at all?"

"You'll have to some day. You're not going to marry Phil, you know."

"No, I'm not going to marry Phil. I know that now. I haven't proposed to him for at least a month—and then he was quite impolite—rude, in fact." She sighed. "Oh, I don't care, but I don't want Jane Loring to marry him."

"She's not likely to. She's as hopelessly stubborn as you are."

Nellie Pennington waited a moment, and then with a laugh, "Nina, you've enjoyed yourself immensely, haven't

THE SILENT BATTLE

you? Jane is *such* an innocent. I'd give worlds to know what you said to her!"

Nina laughed. "Would you?"

"Yes, *do* tell me."

"I will. It's very amusing. She expected me to lie, of course. So I simply told her the truth."

"And she believed——"

"The opposite."

"Of course."

Nellie Pennington laughed up at the passing tree tops.

"How clever of you, Nina! You're wasting your time single. A girl of your talents needs an atmosphere in which to display them."

"And you suggest matrimony," said Nina scornfully.

"There's always your husband, you know."

"But Larry isn't an atmosphere. He's too tangible."

"All men are. It's their chief charm."

"H-m. I've never thought so. I shouldn't have wanted to marry Phil if he had been tangible."

"Then suppose he had—er—accepted you?"

Nina shrugged and crossed her knees.

"I should probably have hated him cordially."

The conversation changed, then lagged, and by the time Nina's home was reached both women were silent, Nina because she was bored, Nellie because she was thinking.

"Good-by, dear," laughed Nina, as she got down at her door. "Don't be surprised at anything you hear. I'm quite desperate, so desperate that I may even take your advice. You'll see me off at the pier, won't you?"

Nellie Pennington nodded. She was quite sure that it was better for everybody that Miss Jaffray should be upon the other side of the water.

The week following, quite by chance she met Henry

THE LODESTAR

K. Loring one afternoon in the gallery at the Metropolitan where the ceramics were. An emissary from the office was opening the cases for him and with rare delight he was examining their contents with a pocket glass. She watched him for a while and when the great man relinquished the last piece of Lang-Yao *sang de bœuf* and the case was closed and locked, she intercepted him and led him off to a bench in a quiet corner where she laid before him the result of a week of deliberation. He had begun by being bored, for there was a case of the tea-dust glazes which he had still planned to look over, but in a moment he had warmed to her proposals and was discussing them with animation.

Yes, he had already planned to go to the Canadian woods again this summer. Mrs. Loring wanted to go abroad this year. Mrs. Loring didn't like the woods unless he rented a permanent camp, the kind of place that he and Jane despised. The plan had been discussed and Jane had expressed a willingness to go. But at Mrs. Loring's opposition the matter had been dropped. But Loring had not given up the idea. It would do Jane a lot of good, he admitted. Mrs. Pennington's was a great plan, a brave plan, a beautiful plan, one that did credit to her sympathies and one that must in the end be successful. He would manage it. He would take the matter up at once and arrange for the same guides and outfit he had had last year. Would Mr. and Mrs. Pennington come as his guests? Of course. Who else—Mr. Worthington and Colonel Broadhurst? But could Mr. Kenyon be relied upon to do his share? Very well. He would leave that to Mrs. Pennington.

The next afternoon, at Mrs. Pennington's request, John Kenyon called at her house in Stuyvesant Square, and his share in the arrangement was explained to him.

THE SILENT BATTLE

He was willing to do anything for Phil Gallatin's happiness that he could, of course, but it amused him to learn how the agreeable lady had taken that willingness for granted, and how she waved aside the difficulties which, as Kenyon suggested, might be encountered. Phil might have other plans. He could be obstinate at times. It might not be easy, either, to get Phil's old guide for the pilgrimage. He needed a rest himself, and would go with Phil himself, if by doing so he could be of any assistance. It was now the first week in May. He would see Phil and report in a few days.

It was the next morning at the office when Kenyon broached the matter to his young partner. He was surprised that Phil fell in with the plan at once.

"Funny," said Phil. "I was thinking of that yesterday. I *am* tired. The woods will do me a lot of good, but do you think that Hood can get along without us until August?"

"We'll manage in some way. You deserve a rest, and I'm going to take one whether I deserve it or not. Could you get that guide you had last year, what's his name—Joe——?"

"Keegón. I could try. We'd need two, but Joe can get another man. I have the address. I'll write to-day."

Gallatin got up and walked across the room to the door, where he stopped.

"I suppose I can fix matters with Mr. Loring——"

"Yes, I think so," replied Kenyon guardedly. "But you'd better be sure of it. He's coming here to-morrow, isn't he?"

Gallatin nodded gravely, and then thoughtfully went out.

That night John Kenyon dutifully reported in Stuyvesant Square. Mr. Loring also dutifully reported there,

THE LODESTAR

and the three persons completed the details of the conspiracy.

So it happened that toward the middle of June, Phil Gallatin and John Kenyon reached the "jumping-off place" in the Canadian wilds. No two "jumping-off places" are alike, but this one consisted of three or four frame dwellings and a store, all squatted on the high bank of a small river, which came crystal-clear from the mystery of the deep woods above. John Kenyon got down from the stage that had driven them the ten miles from the nearest railroad station and stood on the plank walk in front of the store, a touch of color in his yellow cheeks, sniffing eagerly at the smell of the pine balsam. Gallatin glanced around at the familiar scene. Nothing was changed—the canoes drawn up along the bank, the black setter dog, the Indian packers lounging in the shade, the smell of their black tobacco, and the cool welcome of the trader who came out of the store to greet them.

Joe Keegón and another Indian, whose name turned out to be Charlie Knapp, got the valises out of the wagon. Gallatin offered Joe his hand, and the Indian took it with the steady-eyed taciturnity of the wilderness people. Joe was no waster of words or of emotion. He led the way into the store of the trader, and they went over the outfit together—blankets, ammunition, tea, pork, flour, tents, and all the rest of it, while John Kenyon sat on a flour barrel, swinging his legs, smoking a corn cob pipe and listening.

That night, after Phil had turned in, he sent a letter and a telegram to a Canadian address and gave them to the teamster with some money. Then he, too, went to bed—dreaming of Arcadia.

They had been in the woods for three weeks now.

THE SILENT BATTLE

They weren't traveling as light as Phil had done the year before and the outfit included two canoes, well loaded. So they went slowly northward by easy stages, fishing the small streams and camping early. Gallatin had at first been in some doubt as to his partner's physical fitness for severe work, but he soon found that he need have given himself no concern, for with every day a year seemed to be slipping away from John Kenyon, who insisted on taking his share of the burdens with a will that set Phil Gallatin's mind at rest. And as they went farther into the wilderness, they made almost camp for camp the ones that Phil had made the year before. John Kenyon had hoped that Phil would take him into the Kawagama country. He wanted very much to see that waterfall on the south fork of the Birch River that Phil had spoken of. Kenyon had an eye for the beautiful.

For some time he had been wondering what course of action he would take if Phil refused to fall in with his plans, and had already begun to think that it was time to take Joe into his confidence; but he soon found that subterfuge was unnecessary, for Gallatin was directing their course with an unerring definiteness to his own farthest camp among the hills. John Kenyon guessed something of what was passing in the mind of the younger man, and over the camp-fire watched him furtively. The sun and wind had tanned him and the vigorous exercise had brought an appetite that had filled the hollows of his cheeks; but in spite of the glow of health and youth and the delight of their old friendship, a shadow still hung in Phil Gallatin's eyes, which even the joy of the present could not dispel. Kenyon smoked quietly and asked subtle questions about their further pilgrimage.

"To-morrow we'll reach the permanent camp, eh, Joe?" said Gallatin.

THE LODESTAR

Keegón nodded.

“We’ll stay there for a while—fish and explore.”

As the time approached for his dénouement, Kenyon had a guilty sense of intrusion which tempered his elight in the possible success of the venture. But he remembered that he had had little to do in shaping the course of events or the direction of their voyage, except to modify the speed of their journeys so that Phil might reach each the spot intended at the appointed time. Phil seemed drawn forward as though by a lodestar to his destination, as though some force greater than his own will was impelling him.

Kenyon had taken pains to keep a record by the calendar. It was the twenty-eighth of June. The next day Kenyon changed places with Phil and went in Joe’s canoe, when he took the old Indian into his confidence.

“We will camp to-night. To-morrow Phil will want to go fishing alone. You must keep him in camp until the next day. Then you must go with him in the morning, and lead him to the camp in the hills where the deer was killed. *Comprenez?*”

Joe had learned to understand this grave, quiet man from the city, who did his share of the work and who never complained, and he recognized, by its contrast to his docility and willingness, the sudden voice of authority. He nodded.

“A’right,” he said, with a nod. “I take heem.”

Joe’s loquacity was flattering. It was the first time in their pilgrimage that Kenyon had heard Joe utter more than one word at a time.

The woods had seemed so vast, so interminable that Kenyon had often wondered whether it would be possible to find a spot so lacking in identity as the one they were seeking. But Joe’s nod and smile completely reassured

THE SILENT BATTLE

him. In his unfamiliarity with the wilderness he had forgotten that here was Joe Keegón's city, its trails, portages and streams as clearly mapped in his mind as the streets of John Kenyon's New York. The Indian would find the place where the deer was killed. Kenyon breathed a sigh of relief. The wheel of Destiny was spinning now and Kenyon had nothing to do but sit and watch. He had done his share.

That night there was much to do, but Keegón seemed in no hurry. When Gallatin, who seemed tireless was for making a permanent camp at once, Joe shook his head and went on cleaning fish.

"To-morrow," he said.

When the morrow came, Gallatin was off in the underbrush hunting firewood before the others were awake. From his place by the fire Joe watched him lazily.

"Aren't you going to get to work, Joe?"

"Soon," the Indian grunted, but made no movement to get up.

"I want to fish."

"To-morrow."

"Why not to-day?"

"Make camp."

"It won't take all day to make camp."

"Rest," said Joe. And that was all that Gallatin could get out of him, so he said no more, for he knew by experience that when Joe's mind had decided a question of policy, mere words made no impression on him.

John Kenyon listened from the flap of the tent, with a sleepy eye on the rising sun.

"Don't try to combat the forces of nature, my son," he laughed. "Joe's right! I for one am going to take things easy." And he rolled himself in his blanket, sank back on his balsam couch and closed his eyes again.

THE LODESTAR

There was nothing for Phil but to bow to the inevitable. That day he worked harder even than the guides and it seemed to John Kenyon that some inward force was driving him at the top of his bent. He spoke little, laughed not at all and late in the afternoon went off upstream alone with his rod and creel, returning later gloomy and morose.

"No fish," said Joe, looking at the empty creel. "Fish to-morrow!"

Joe actually smiled and Gallatin laughed in spite of himself.

"Beeg fish—to-morrow," repeated Joe. "I show—um."

The next day Kenyon stayed in camp with Charlie Knapp, and watched Phil's departure upstream. Joe had full instructions and as he followed Gallatin's broad shoulders into the brush he turned toward the fire and nodded to Kenyon. There was a pact between them and Kenyon understood.

The sun was high before Joe left the stream and cut into the underbrush. His employer hadn't even taken his rod from its case, and his creel was empty. Early in the morning he had asked his guide to take him to the little stream where the deer was killed, and he followed the swift noiseless steps of the old Indian, his shoulders bent, his eyes peering through the thicket in search of landmarks. It was midday before the two men reached the familiar water and Phil identified the two bowlders above his old camping-place. Here Keegón halted, eying the pool below.

"Fish," said he.

Gallatin fingered at the fastenings of his rod case, looking downstream, while Joe sat on a rock and munched a biscuit.

THE SILENT BATTLE

“I’m going downstream, Joe. You follow.”

The Indian nodded and Gallatin moved down among the rocks in the bed of the stream. Pools invited him, but he did not fish. He had not even jointed his rod. He was moving rapidly now, like a man with a mission, a mission with which fishing had nothing in common, splashing through the shallow water, jumping from rock to rock, or where the going was good along the shore, through the underbrush. There was a trail to follow now, a faint trail scarcely defined, but in which he saw the faint marks of last year’s footprints. His own they must be, heavy from the weight of the deer he had carried through the mud and wet. They were the symbols of his regeneration. Since then he had brought other burdens to camp and had thrown them at her feet, for what?

Later on, in a moist spot, he stopped and peered at the ground curiously. Other footprints had emerged from somewhere and joined his own, fresh footprints, one made by the in-turned toe of an Indian, the other smaller, the heel of which cut deep into the mud and moss. He bent forward following them eagerly. What could a woman be doing here?

Suddenly Gallatin straightened and sniffed the air. The smoke of a camp fire! The smell of cooking fish! Some one had preceded him. He moved forward cautiously, his heart beating with suppressed excitement, his mind for the first time aware that unusual impulses had dominated him all the morning. He also knew that the smell of those cooking fish was delicious.

In a moment he recognized the glade, the two beech trees and the rock, saw the bulk of the shack that he had built, the glow of the fire and a small figure sitting on a log before it, cooking fish on a spit. He stopped

THE LODESTAR

and passed a hand before his eyes. Had a year passed? Or was it—yesterday? Who was the girl that sat familiarly at his fire, hatless, her brown hair tawny in the sunlight, her slender neck bent forward?

He rubbed his eyes and peered again. There was no mistake. It was Jane.

XXIX

ARCADIA AGAIN

SHE did not move at his approach, although his footsteps among the dried leaves must have been plainly audible, and he was within ten feet of the fire before she turned.

"We had better be going soon, Challón," she began and then stopped, as she raised her head and looked at him. He wore his old fishing hat with the holes in it, a faded blue flannel shirt, corduroys and laced boots; and as her eye passed quickly over his figure to his face, she paled, started backward and stared with a terror in her eyes of something beyond comprehension. He saw her put her arm before her face to shut out the sight of him and rise to one knee, stumbling blindly away, when he caught her in his arms, whispering madly:

"Jane! Jane! Don't turn away from me. It's Phil, do you hear? Myself—no other. You were waiting for me—and I came to you."

She trembled violently and her hand clutched his arm as though to assure herself of its reality.

"Jane, look up at me. Look in my eyes and you'll see your vision there—where it has always been, and always will be—unchangeable. Look at me, Jane."

Slowly she raised her head and saw that what he said was true, the pallor of dismay retreating before the warm flush that suffused her from neck to brow.

"It's—*you*, Phil? I can't understand——"

"Nor I. I don't know or care—so long as you are

ARCADIA AGAIN

here—close in my arms. I'll never let you go again. Kiss me, Jane."

She obeyed, blindly, passionately, the wonder in her eyes dying in heavenly content.

"You came to me, Phil," she whispered. "How? Why?"

"Because you wanted me, because you were waiting for me. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, I was waiting for you. I came here because I couldn't stay away. I—I don't know why I came—" She paused and her hands tightened on his shoulders again. "Oh, Phil," she cried again, "there's no mistake?"

"No—no."

"You frightened me so. I thought you were—unreal—a vision—your hat, your clothes are the same. I thought you were—the ghost of happiness."

He kissed her tenderly.

"There are no ghosts, Jane, dear. Not even those of unhappiness," he murmured. "There is no room for anything in the world but hope and joy—and love—yours and mine. I love you, dearest. Even when reason despaired, I loved you most and loved the pain of it."

"The pain of it—I know."

She was sobbing now, her slender body quivering under his caress.

"Don't, Jane," he whispered. "Don't cry. Don't!"

But she smiled up at him through her tears.

"Let me, Phil, I—I'm so happy."

He soothed her gently and held her close in his arms, her head against his breast, as he would have held that of a tired child. After a time she relaxed and lay quiet.

"You're glad?" he asked.

There was no reply.

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Are you glad?" he repeated.

"Glad! Oh, Phil, I've suffered so."

"Oh, Jane, why? Look at me, dear. It was all a mistake. How could you have misjudged me?"

She drew away from him and took his head between the palms of her hands and sought his eyes with her own.

"There was no other?" she asked haltingly.

"No—a thousand times no," he returned her gaze eagerly. "How could there be any other?" he asked simply.

She looked long and then closed her eyes and drew his lips down to hers.

"You believe in me—now?" he asked.

"Yes," she whispered, her eyes still closed. "I believe in you. Even if I didn't, I would still—still—adore you."

"God bless you for that. But you *do* believe——" he persisted.

"Yes, yes, I do believe in you, Phil. I can't doubt you when you look at me like that."

"Then I'll never look away from you."

"Don't look away. Those eyes! How they've haunted me. The shadows in them! There are no shadows now, Phil. They're laughing at me, at my feminine weakness, convinced against itself. I thought you were a ghost." She held him away and looked at him. "But you're not in the least ghostlike. You're looking very well. I don't believe you've worried."

"Nor you. I've never seen you looking handsomer. It's hardly flattering to my vanity."

She sighed.

"I've lived in Arcadia for three weeks."

He led her over to the log beside the shack and sat beside her.

ARCADIA AGAIN

"Tell me," he said at last, "how you came to be here—alone."

She straightened quickly and peered around.

"But I'm *not* alone—my guide—he went into the brush for firewood."

"Curious!"

"He should be back by now."

"I hope he doesn't come back."

"Oh, Phil, so do I—but he will. And you?"

"My guide, Joe Keegón, is there," and he pointed upstream.

A shade passed over her face.

"But we'll send them away, Jane, back where they came from. We need no guides now, you and I, no guides but our hearts, no servants but our hands. We'll begin again—where we left off—yesterday."

She crouched closer in his arms.

"Yesterday. Yes, it was only yesterday that we were here," she sighed. "But the long night between!"

"A dream, Jane, a dream—a phantom unhappiness—only this is real."

"Are you sure? I'm afraid I'll awaken."

"No," he laughed. "See, the fire is just as we left it last night; the black log charred, the shack, your bed, the two birch trees and your ridgepole."

"Yes," she smiled.

"The two creels and the cooking fish——"

"Oh, those fish! My fish are all in the fire."

"Do you care?"

"No—I'll let them burn. But you'll be good to me, won't you, Phil?"

There was another long pause. About them the orchestral stillness of the deep woods, amid which they lived a moment of immortality, all thought, all speech inade-

THE SILENT BATTLE

quate to their sweet communion. A venturesome sparrow perched itself upon Jane's ridgepole, and after putting its head on one side in inquiry uttered a low and joyful chirp, and failing to attract attention flew away to tell the gossip to its mate. The breeze crooned, the stream sighed and the sunlight kissed the cardinal flowers, which lifted their heads for its caress. All Nature breathed contentment, peace and consummation.

But there was much to be said, much mystery to be revealed, and it was Jane who first spoke. She drew away from him gently and looked out into the underbrush.

"Phil! Those guides," she whispered. "They may have seen."

"Let them. I don't care. Do you?"

"Ye-s. Let me think. I can't understand. Why hasn't Challón come back? He was here a minute ago—or was it an hour? I don't know." Her fingers struggled with the disorder of her hair as she smiled at him.

"Challón is a myth. I don't believe you had a guide."

"A myth, indeed! I wish he was—now. I wanted to go out alone, but father wouldn't let me—"

"Mr. Loring!" Gallatin started up. "Oh, of course!" he sighed. "I had forgotten that there were such things as fathers."

"But there are—there is—" she laughed, "a perfectly substantial father within ten miles from here."

"You're in camp again—in the same spot?"

She nodded.

"Any one else?" he frowned. "Not Mr. Van Duyn."

"Oh, dear, no. Coley has gone to Carlsbad."

He took her by the hand again. "You sent him away?"

ARCADIA AGAIN

"Yes."

"When?"

"After 'Clovelly.' Oh, Phil, you hurt me so. But I couldn't stand seeing him after that."

"Why?"

"Because, cruel as you were, I knew that you were right and that I was wrong. I hated you that night—hated you because you made me such a pitiful thing; but— Oh, I loved you, too, more than ever. If only you hadn't been so hard—so bitter. If you had been gentle then, you might have taken me in your arms and crushed me if you liked. I shouldn't have cared."

"Sh—that was only in the dream, Jane." And then: "You never cared for *him*?" he asked quickly.

"Never."

"Then why——?"

"My pride, Phil. Poor Coley!"

He echoed the words heartlessly.

"Poor Coley!"

A pause. "Who else is in camp?"

"Colonel Broadhurst, Mr. Worthington, Mr. and Mrs. Pennington——"

"Nellie! Here?"

"Yes, she had never been in the woods before. Why, what is the matter, Phil?"

Gallatin straightened, one hand to his forehead.

"I have it," he said.

"Have what?"

"It was Nellie. I might have guessed it."

"Guessed——?"

"It was *her* plan—coming up here—to the woods. Before we left New York she and John Kenyon were as thick as thieves—and——"

"Oh!"

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Good old Uncle John! He did it. I remember now—a hundred things."

It was Jane's turn to be surprised.

"Yes—yes. It's true, Phil. Oh, how cleverly they managed! But how could Nellie have known that I would come here? I only told Johnny Challón."

Phil laughed.

"Nellie Pennington is a remarkable woman. She knew. She knows everything."

"Yes, I think she does," said Jane. "We've been in camp a week. I started with Challón four days ago. He said he had lost the trail, and I gave it up. This morning—I can see it all now. Father—and Nellie started me off themselves at sunrise. They knew I'd come here and——"

She stopped and took him abruptly by the arm. "Phil! Those wicked people had even fixed the day and hour of our meeting."

He nodded.

"Of course! I wanted to come yesterday, but they wouldn't let me. If I had—I should have missed you."

"Oh—how terrible!"

Her accents were so genuine, her face so distressed at this possibility, that he laughed and caught her in his arms again.

"But I *didn't* miss you, Jane. That's the point. Even if I had, Nellie would have managed somehow. She's an extraordinary woman."

"She is, Phil. She chaperoned me until Coley was at the point of exasperation."

"Quite right of her, too."

"But why has she taken such an interest in you—in us?"

"Because she's an angel, because she has the wisdom

ARCADIA AGAIN

of the centuries, because she is a born matchmaker, because she always does what she makes up her mind to do, and, lastly—and most important, Jane, she has a proper sense of the eternal fitness of things.”

“That’s true. Nothing else was possible, was it, Phil?”

“No. It was written—a thousand years ago.”

She turned in his arms.

“Have you thought that—always?” she asked.

“I never gave up hoping.”

“Nor I.”

She was silent a moment.

“Phil.”

“What, Jane?”

“Would you have come here to Arcadia, alone, even if——”

“Yes. I would have come here—alone. I was planning it all spring. This place is redolent of you. Your spirit has haunted it for a year. I wanted to be here to share it with Kee-way-din, if I couldn’t have—yourself.”

“What would you have done if I had not been here?”

“I don’t know—waited for you, I think.”

“But it was I—who waited——”

“You didn’t wait long. What were you thinking of, there by the fire?”

“Of my dream.”

“You dreamed of me?”

“Yes. The night we came into camp I dreamed of you. I saw you poling a canoe upstream. I followed you across a portage. There was a heavy pack upon your back, but you did not mind the weight, for your step was light and your face happy. There was a shadow in your eyes, the same shadow, but your lips were smiling.

THE SILENT BATTLE

Night fell and still you toiled in the moonlight, and I knew that you were coming here. There were voices, too, and you were singing with them; but I wasn't afraid, because you seemed so joyful."

"I was joyful."

"I saw the shack—and the ashes of the fire and I saw you coming through the bushes toward it. But when you came to the fire I was not there. You called me, but I couldn't answer. I tried to, but I seemed to be dumb—and then—and that was all."

"A dream. It was all true—except the last."

"That's why I came. I wanted to be here, so that if you *did* come, you might not be disappointed. I had failed you before. I did not want it to happen again. I brought Challón to show me the way. I was coming here again—and again—until you found me."

He raised her chin and looked into her eyes.

"Dream again, dear."

"I'm dreaming now," she sighed. "It is so sweet. Don't let me wake, Phil. It—it mightn't be true."

"Yes, it's true, all true. You'll marry me, Jane?"

"Whenever you ask me to."

He looked away from her down the stream where the sunlight danced in the open.

"I told you once that I would come for you some day—when I had conquered myself," he said slowly, "when I had made a place among the useful men of the world, when I could look my Enemy in the eye—for a long while and not be defeated—to stare him down until he stole away—far off where I wouldn't ever find him."

"Yes."

"He has gone, Jane. He does not trouble me and will not, I know. It was a long battle, a silent battle

ARCADIA AGAIN

between us, but I've won. And I'm ready to take you, Jane."

"Take me, then."

Her lips were already his.

"You could have had me before, Phil," she murmured. "I would have fought the Enemy with you—he was my Enemy, too, but you would not have me."

He shook his head.

"Not then. It was my own fight—not yours. And yet if it hadn't been for you, perhaps I shouldn't have fought at all."

She drew away from him a little.

"No—I didn't help you. I only made it harder. I'll regret that always. It was your own victory—against odds."

He smiled.

"What does it matter now. I *had* to win—not that battle alone—but others."

"Yes, I know," she smiled. "Father is mad about you."

Gallatin threw up his chin and laughed to the sky.

"He ought to be. I'd be mad, too, in his place."

His joy was infectious, and she smiled at him fondly.

"You're a very wonderful person, aren't you?"

"How could a demigod be anything else but wonderful? You created me. Aren't you pleased with your handiwork?"

"Immensely."

He paused a moment and then whispered into her ear.

"You'll marry me—soon?"

"Yes."

"When?"

THE SILENT BATTLE

"Whenever you want me, Phil."

"This summer! They shall leave us here!" he said. She colored divinely.

"Oh!"

"It can be managed."

"A wedding in the woods! Oh, Phil!"

"Why not? I'll see——"

But she put her fingers over his lips and would not listen to him.

"Yes, dear," he insisted, capturing her hands, "it shall be here. All this is ours—*our* forest, *our* stream, *our* sunlight, yours and mine, *our* kingdom. Would you change a kingdom for a villa or a fashionable hotel?"

"No, no," she whispered.

"We will begin life together here—where love began—alone. You shall cook and I shall kill for you, and build with my own hands another shack, a larger one with two windows and a door—a wonderful shack with chairs, a table——"

"And a porcelain bathtub?"

"No—the bath is down the corridor—to the right." She had used it.

"It will do," she smiled. "May I have a mirror?"

"The pool——"

Her lips twisted.

"I tried it once, and fell in. A mirror, *please*," she insisted.

"Yes—a mirror—then."

"And a—a small, a very tiny steamer trunk?"

He laughed.

"Oh, yes, and a French maid, smelling salts and a motor——"

"Phil! What shall I cook with?"

"A frying pan and a tin coffeepot."

ARCADIA AGAIN

"But I can make such beautiful muffins."

"I'll build an oven."

"And cake——"

"We'll live like gods——"

"Demigods——"

"And goddesses."

It was sweet nonsense but nobody heard it but themselves.

The shadows lengthened. The patches of light, turned to gold, were lifting along the tree trunks when from the deeps of the ancient forest below them there came three flutelike notes of liquid music of such depth and richness that they sat spellbound. In a moment they heard it again, the three cadenced notes of unearthly beauty and then the pause, while all nature held its breath and waited to hear again.

"The hermit thrush," he whispered.

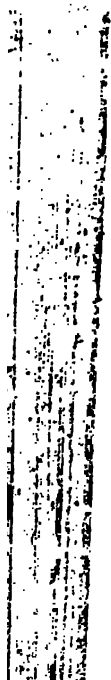
"Oh, Phil. It's from the very soul of things."

"Sh——"

But they did not hear it again. The hermit thrush, sings seldom and then only to those who belong to the Immortal Brotherhood of the Forest.

(3)

THE END





1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice G. D. C. O'Connell, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New South Wales" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice G. D. C. O'Connell, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New South Wales".

3



SEP 4 - 1930

